Martinique: Extraction Through Continuity (1635-2025)

Preface: Expanded Core Framework Series

This is a new series using an **Expanded Core Framework** that evolved from the original **Core Framework** .

This expanded analysis was created through continued collaboration between Thomas J. Bryan and Claude (Anthropic's AI system). The collaboration improved both the methodology and the conclusions.

Human Contribution (Thomas J. Bryan):

- Research direction and case study selection
- Theoretical framework and interpretation
- Final analytical judgments and publication decisions

AI Contribution (Claude/Anthropic):

- Historical scholarship synthesis and bibliographic research
- Essay composition and structural analysis
- Intellectual challenge and critical questioning
- Pattern identification and comparative analysis

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Original preface ("An Unexpected Journey") published separately provides full context for how this research project developed.

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Martinique: Extraction Through Continuity (1635-2025)

Part 1 of 4: Colonial Engineering and Elite Consolidation (1635-1802)

French Creole Societies Project

Introduction: A Question of Continuity

On a small Caribbean island of 1,128 square kilometers, French colonizers engineered a plantation society in 1635 that would endure for nearly four centuries. Today, in 2025, Martinique remains French territory—not independent nation, but département, legally equivalent to any region of metropolitan France. The same white Creole families (békés) who owned sugar plantations in 1700 control major sectors of the economy in 2025. This represents perhaps the most extreme case of elite continuity in the post-plantation Caribbean.

The question this case study examines is deceptively simple: **What happened to the lives of average people in Martinique from French arrival in 1635 through 2025, and what structures determined whether extraction patterns broke or persisted?**

The material outcomes are striking. Martinique's GDP per capita in 2025 stands around $28,000, with life expectancy of 82 years, universal healthcare, modern infrastructure, and literacy rates exceeding 90%. These figures surpass most independent Caribbean nations. Yet Martinique's economy depends on approximately €2 billion in annual transfers from France. Unemployment hovers around 20%, reaching 40% among youth. The békés—roughly 1% of the population—control an estimated 50-70% of the economy despite legal equality established in 1848 and reinforced by full French citizenship in 1946.

This case study argues that extraction patterns in Martinique adapted rather than broke across nearly four centuries. The mechanisms changed—from direct slavery to wage labor to economic dependency—but wealth continued flowing to a persistent elite while the masses remained economically marginal. What makes Martinique analytically significant is not that extraction continued (this pattern appears across many colonial cases) but *how* it continued: through elite adaptation to every legal transformation, metropolitan protection of elite property rights, and eventually integration into the French welfare state that provided material benefits while maintaining fundamental economic control.

The analytical framework applied here examines nine elements systematically:

1. **Foundation Conditions** - How France engineered the plantation society
2. **Labor Systems** - From Code Noir slavery through contemporary labor markets
3. **Land and Resource Control** - Who owned what, and how ownership persisted
4. **Legal and Institutional Frameworks** - Code Noir, abolition laws, DOM status
5. **Narrative Construction** - Ideologies justifying hierarchy
6. **Wealth Extraction Mechanisms** - Who captured value and how
7. **Information and Education Control** - Language policy and schooling
8. **Resistance Suppression** - How challenges were contained
9. **Elite Network Coordination** - How békés maintained power

This first part covers 1635-1802, examining how France engineered the plantation economy, how the Code Noir structured slavery and racial hierarchy, and how the French Revolution's impact was muted by British occupation. Part 2 will examine the period 1802-1848 and final abolition; Part 3 covers 1848-1946 and departmentalization; Part 4 analyzes 1946-2025 and contemporary conditions.

The story begins not with romantic narrative of resistance (though resistance occurred) but with elite problem-solving: how French colonizers transformed a small Caribbean island into a profitable extraction machine, and how their descendants maintained control for 390 years.

I. Foundation Conditions: Engineering a Plantation Society

The Spanish Inheritance and French Seizure (1492-1635)

Christopher Columbus sighted Martinique on June 15, 1502, during his fourth voyage. The island's indigenous inhabitants—Caribs who called their island Madinina ("island of flowers")—numbered approximately 1,000-2,000 people. They lived through fishing, agriculture of cassava and sweet potatoes, and trade with other Caribbean islands. Spanish claims to Martinique stemmed from Columbus's landing, but Spain never established settlements. The island lacked the gold deposits that attracted Spanish colonization to larger islands, and its small Carib population couldn't be easily exploited for labor compared to larger populations elsewhere.

For 133 years after Columbus's sighting, Martinique remained outside European settlement but not European impact. Spanish slaving raids occasionally targeted the island. Disease introduced by sporadic European contact probably reduced the Carib population before systematic colonization began. By 1635, when French colonizers arrived, the Carib population may have already declined to 700-1,500 people.

The French claim to Martinique came through private enterprise, not royal conquest. On September 1, 1635, Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc—a Norman nobleman and privateer operating

under patent from Cardinal Richelieu—landed at the site that would become Saint-Pierre with approximately 150 French settlers. D'Esnambuc represented the Compagnie des Îles d'Amérique, a chartered company granted monopoly rights over French Caribbean colonization in exchange for establishing Catholic settlements.

The company's charter reveal its purpose plainly: profit through plantation agriculture and trade monopoly. Article 12 of the 1626 charter granting powers to settle Caribbean islands stated the company could "negotiate, contract and trade with the savages of these countries...traffic in all merchandise which will be found in the islands, and establish all commerce." The language of commerce preceded any mention of religion or civilization, despite Catholic requirements inserted for legitimization.

Indigenous Elimination and Early Settlement (1635-1660)

French colonization of Martinique required eliminating the indigenous Caribs. This occurred through combination of warfare, disease, and expulsion over 25 years.

Initially, d'Esnambuc attempted peaceful coexistence. The first settlement at Saint-Pierre in 1635 purchased land from Caribs rather than seizing it outright. But this arrangement proved temporary. French colonists wanted to expand tobacco cultivation, which required more land. Carib resistance to further French expansion led to escalating conflict.

The Carib Wars in Martinique (1635-1660) followed a pattern: French expansion, Carib resistance, French military response, Carib retreat to inland forests, guerrilla attacks, French punitive expeditions, eventual Carib surrender or expulsion. Specific documented incidents include:

- **1636**: Caribs attacked French settlement at Prêcheur after French tobacco planters attempted to establish plantations on Carib fishing grounds. French militia killed approximately 80 Caribs in retaliation.

- **1638**: Major Carib offensive against French settlements killed 15 French colonists and destroyed tobacco fields. French Governor Du Parquet responded with systematic campaign to drive Caribs from coastal areas entirely.

- **1654**: Final Carib resistance centered in the north of the island collapsed after French military expedition. By this point, disease (smallpox and measles primarily) had devastated Carib population more effectively than warfare. Contemporary French accounts describe finding abandoned Carib villages with unburied dead.

By 1660, virtually no Caribs remained in Martinique. Survivors fled to neighboring Dominica and St. Vincent, where Carib populations persisted longer. French colonists occupied an island now emptied of indigenous inhabitants. This process—indigenous elimination creating blank slate for

plantation engineering—repeated across Caribbean colonization, but each case showed specific patterns of violence and displacement.

The human cost to Caribs cannot be precisely quantified due to limited documentation, but demographic evidence suggests near-total population loss. From perhaps 1,500-2,000 Caribs in 1635, the population fell to fewer than 100 by 1660, with survivors departing rather than remaining under French control.

For French colonists, indigenous elimination solved the "labor problem" by removing competing land claims, but it created a new problem: who would work the plantations? The answer was enslaved Africans, transforming Martinique from a settler colony to a slave society.

The Tobacco Phase and Transition to Sugar (1635-1660)

Early French settlers in Martinique (1635-1650) cultivated tobacco as primary cash crop. Small planters—perhaps 20-50 acres each—grew tobacco using a mix of indentured European laborers (*engagés*) and small numbers of enslaved Africans. The social structure resembled early Virginia or Barbados: white small planters dominated, with some becoming middling planters, all competing for access to French markets.

The tobacco economy had specific characteristics:

Land use: Tobacco cultivation required less land than sugar, enabling smaller plantation units. A planter with 30 acres and 10 workers (mix of indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans) could produce commercially viable tobacco crop.

Labor: Initially, most labor came from French *engagés*—indentured servants contracted for 3 years typically, receiving passage to Martinique in exchange for labor. Perhaps 3,000-5,000 indentured French workers came to Martinique between 1635-1650. After completing indentures, some became small planters themselves. Enslaved Africans numbered perhaps 500-1,000 by 1650—present but not yet dominant labor force.

Markets: Tobacco shipped to France faced competition from Virginia tobacco and Spanish tobacco. Prices declined through 1640s-1650s as tobacco supply increased globally. French mercantilist policy required Martinique tobacco ship only to France, preventing planters from seeking better prices in Dutch or English markets.

Elite formation: Early tobacco planters included the Du Parquet family (governors of Martinique), small noble families from Normandy and Brittany, and some wealthy merchants. Land grants from the Compagnie created initial wealth concentration, but tobacco profits were modest compared to later sugar wealth.

The transition from tobacco to sugar transformed Martinique's economy and society fundamentally. This shift began in 1654 and accelerated through 1660s-1680s.

The trigger was external: Dutch Jewish refugees from Brazil arrived in Martinique in 1654 after Portuguese reconquest of Dutch Brazil. These refugees brought sugar cultivation techniques, milling technology, and capital. The technology transfer was critical—sugar production required knowledge of complex processing (crushing cane, boiling juice, crystallizing sugar, refining) that tobacco planters lacked.

The first sugar mill in Martinique was established in 1654 with Dutch technology and financing. By 1660, approximately 10 sugar mills operated. By 1680, sugar had displaced tobacco as dominant crop. By 1700, approximately 80% of export value came from sugar, with coffee and cacao as secondary crops.

Why sugar replaced tobacco:

Profitability: Sugar prices in Europe remained high through late 1600s and 1700s due to growing European demand. A sugar plantation could generate 3-5 times the revenue of equivalent-sized tobacco plantation.

Capital intensity: Sugar required massive capital investment—mill equipment, boiling houses, curing houses, significant enslaved labor force. Initial investment could reach 50,000-100,000 livres for medium plantation. This created barrier to entry that consolidated planter class. Small tobacco planters couldn't afford conversion to sugar; they sold land to wealthier planters or became marginal.

Labor requirements: Sugar cultivation and processing required year-round intensive labor. Indentured Europeans were unsuitable—mortality was high, contracts expired, freed servants demanded wages. Enslaved Africans became essential. Sugar plantation with 100-200 enslaved workers became typical unit.

Economies of scale: Large sugar plantations were more profitable than small ones due to milling efficiency and processing economies. This drove land consolidation.

The sugar transition created Martinique's fundamental social structure: a small planter elite (békés), a large enslaved African majority, and a marginal free colored class emerging from mixed-race children of planters and enslaved women.

The Scale of the Transformation: 1660-1789

The numbers reveal the transformation's magnitude:

Population growth (enslaved people):

- 1660: ~5,000 enslaved Africans
- 1680: ~13,000
- 1700: ~15,000
- 1720: ~35,000
- 1750: ~65,000

- 1789: ~83,000-87,000

Population structure by 1789:

- Enslaved people: 83,000-87,000 (approximately 87% of total)
- Free people of color: 5,000-6,000 (approximately 5%)
- Whites: 10,000-11,000 (approximately 10%)
- Total population: ~100,000

Sugar production:

- 1680: ~500 tons annually
- 1700: ~2,000 tons
- 1750: ~7,000 tons
- 1780s: ~10,000-12,000 tons annually at peak

Plantation concentration by 1789: Approximately 400-500 sugar plantations operated, meaning average plantation held 170-220 enslaved people. The largest plantations—perhaps 50-80 estates—held 300-500 enslaved people each. These large estates dominated production.

Economic value: Martinique's total exports in 1780s averaged 15-20 million livres annually. For comparison, the entire French royal government revenue in 1788 was approximately 500 million livres—Martinique alone generated 3-4% of that figure for French merchants and the Crown through import duties.

II. Labor Systems: The Code Noir and Slavery's Legal Architecture

The Code Noir: Engineering Slavery Through Law (1685)

On March 1685, Louis XIV promulgated the Code Noir (Black Code)—60 articles regulating slavery, racial hierarchy, and colonial administration throughout French Caribbean colonies. The Code applied to Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint-Domingue (later Haiti), and other French possessions. Understanding the Code Noir is essential because it structured slavery in Martinique for 163 years (1685-1848) across three abolition cycles.

The Code Noir was elite problem-solving: how to maintain control of an enslaved Black majority while maximizing extraction, prevent rebellion, and create legal order normalizing human property. Its provisions addressed every aspect of enslaved life and planter authority.

Religious Control and Ideological Legitimation:

Article 2 required all enslaved people be baptized and instructed in the Catholic faith. This served multiple purposes: (1) ideological legitimation—slavery was "civilizing" Africans through Christianity; (2) cultural control—Catholic instruction in French language began process of cultural erasure; (3) Church surveillance—priests could monitor enslaved populations.

Article 3 banned all religions except Catholicism in the colonies, forbidding Protestant and Jewish religious practice. This applied to whites as well, ensuring Catholic ideological monopoly.

Article 9 prohibited religious assemblies of enslaved people "day or night, under pretext of weddings or otherwise" under penalty of corporal punishment for enslaved people and fines for masters who permitted it. Catholic instruction was compulsory (Article 2), but enslaved people couldn't organize religious practice independently. This prevented gatherings that might enable organizing while forcing participation in master-controlled religion.

The contradiction was deliberate: enslaved people must become Catholic but couldn't practice Catholicism independently, ensuring religion served control rather than liberation.

Reproduction and Family:

Article 12 stated that children born to enslaved mothers inherited enslaved status (*partus sequitur ventrem*—the child follows the womb). This made slavery perpetual through generations, ensuring permanent labor supply through reproduction. It also created incentive for masters to encourage enslaved women to have children, though no provision protected enslaved families.

Article 10 required masters to observe Catholic rules for marriage, attempting to regulate enslaved relationships through Church law. But Article 11 prohibited enslaved people from marrying without master's consent. This gave masters complete control over enslaved people's intimate lives and family formation.

Article 13 declared children of enslaved people under age 14 couldn't be separated from parents in sale. This theoretical protection of enslaved families was routinely violated—plantation account books show frequent separation of children from parents, with no recorded prosecutions under Article 13.

Article 47 declared husband, wife, and prepubescent children couldn't be seized separately for debt. Again, this theoretical protection meant little in practice when masters sold enslaved people or plantations changed hands.

Property Status:

Article 44 defined enslaved people as *meubles* (movable property). This legal classification meant enslaved people could be sold, mortgaged, inherited, seized for debt, and disposed of like furniture or livestock. The term *meubles* distinguished enslaved people from *immeubles* (immovable property like land)—enslaved people had less legal protection than real estate.

Article 46 stated enslaved people could own no property. Everything enslaved people possessed technically belonged to masters, including any gardens, earnings from hired-out labor, or possessions acquired. This ensured total economic dependency.

Article 48 prohibited enslaved people from selling anything without master's express permission "even though they had permission from their masters." This prevented enslaved people from developing any economic autonomy.

Article 28 permitted enslaved people to bring criminal charges in court as plaintiffs without needing master's permission. This theoretical right meant little since enslaved people had no legal standing to testify against whites in most proceedings.

Food, Clothing, and Treatment:

Article 22 required masters to provide specific rations weekly: each enslaved person age 10+ must receive "two and a half pots of cassava flour...or three cassavas weighing at least two and a half pounds each...and two pounds of salted beef or three pounds of fish...and children to receive half." Masters must also provide "two suits of cloth or four ells of canvas yearly."

This provision established minimal subsistence requirements. Reality in Martinique deviated significantly:

Contemporary accounts from the 1700s describe chronic malnutrition among enslaved populations. Father Jean-Baptiste Labat, Dominican priest and plantation owner in Martinique (1694-1705), wrote extensively about plantation life. His journals describe enslaved people receiving inadequate food—often just cassava and occasionally salted fish, with meat rare except on Catholic feast days. Clothing provision was irregular; many enslaved people wore rags.

Article 23 attempted to prohibit masters from giving enslaved people *tafia* (rum) instead of food rations. The fact this required prohibition indicates it occurred commonly—masters giving rum in place of food to reduce costs.

Article 25 required masters to provide medical care to sick enslaved people and to support elderly or invalid enslaved people unable to work. Plantation records show minimal medical expenditure. Most plantations had no dedicated medical care; sick enslaved people received minimal attention unless valuable enough to warrant doctor's expense.

Violence and Punishment:

Article 33 specified death penalty for enslaved person who struck master, mistress, master's wife, or their children "producing blood or bruising from the face." Violence flowed only one direction—masters could beat enslaved people (Article 42), but any enslaved resistance to violence faced capital punishment.

Article 34 mandated death penalty for theft of horses, cows, or other large animals. Theft of smaller items faced corporal punishment escalating to branding and eventual death for repeat offenses.

Article 35 imposed death penalty for theft by enslaved people if the theft "merited it"—giving masters and courts broad discretion to execute enslaved people for property crimes.

Article 38 prescribed punishments for escaped enslaved people (maroons):

- First escape: ears cut off, branded with fleur-de-lis
- Second escape: hamstringing (cutting tendons to permanently disable), branded
- Third escape: death penalty

These punishments were public spectacles designed to terrorize other enslaved people. Parish records in Martinique document numerous executions and mutilations under these provisions.

Article 42 permitted masters to "chain and beat their slaves with rods or ropes" but prohibited "torture or mutilation." The distinction between beating and torture was left to masters' judgment. No enforcement mechanism existed—who would prosecute masters? Colonial courts were controlled by planters themselves.

Article 43 prohibited killing enslaved people. Masters who killed enslaved people faced prosecution. But in practice, deaths from "excessive punishment" rarely resulted in charges, and when charges occurred, penalties were minimal. Planters investigating other planters' violence against enslaved people had no incentive for prosecution.

Manumission and Free Colored Status:

Article 55 granted masters power to free enslaved people age 25 or older through declaration before colonial council or by testament. Manumission required official approval and master's will—freedom was a gift, not a right.

Article 56 declared that freed people ("our subjects without any other letters of naturalization") had same rights as those born free, including inheritance rights and ability to receive donations from whites.

Article 57 granted freed people who had performed "notable services" to masters the same rights as native-born French subjects.

These provisions created the legal basis for Martinique's free colored class. By 1789, approximately 5,000-6,000 free people of color lived in Martinique. Most were mixed-race children of white planters and enslaved women who had been freed. Some purchased their freedom. Some, particularly in urban Saint-Pierre, became artisans, small merchants, or property owners—a few even owned small plantations with enslaved people.

Enforcement and Reality:

The Code Noir's "protective" provisions (food rations, prohibition on torture, limits on punishment) were rarely enforced. Colonial administration in Martinique consisted of a governor appointed by the Crown, an intendant (financial administrator), a Sovereign Council (colonial court), and parish officials. All were planters or allied with planter interests. The legal system enforced provisions benefiting masters (property rights, punishment of resistance) while ignoring provisions constraining master authority.

Enforcement would have required:

1. Enslaved people able to bring complaints to authorities
2. Authorities willing to prosecute masters
3. Evidence of violations (difficult when violations occurred on isolated plantations)
4. Penalties sufficient to deter violations

None of these conditions existed. Masters controlled legal system, investigated complaints against themselves, and faced no realistic prospect of prosecution for violating Code Noir provisions meant to "protect" enslaved people.

The Code Noir's primary function was legitimation, not limitation. It created appearance of regulated, "humane" slavery while encoding comprehensive legal architecture for human property and racial hierarchy.

The Racial Hierarchy in Practice

The Code Noir engineered a three-tier society in Martinique:

Tier 1: Whites (10,000-11,000 by 1789)

The white population divided into distinct groups with different interests:

Békés (white Creole planters): The core of Martinique's elite, the békés were white Creole families (mostly French origin, some Dutch or Irish) who owned sugar plantations. By 1789, approximately 300-400 families controlled most plantation land and enslaved people. The largest békés families—perhaps 50-80 families—owned estates with 300-500 enslaved people each, representing the colonial aristocracy. These families accumulated wealth across generations through plantation ownership, often marrying within a small circle to preserve property concentration.

Key békés families established by 1789 included the Hayots, Aubérys, Pécoul, Clerc, Dormoy, and Assier de Pompignan families. These names appear repeatedly in plantation records, marriage registers, and commercial documents across the 1700s. Crucially, **many of these same family names appear in contemporary Martinique economic records in 2025—nearly 250 years later—indicating unprecedented elite continuity**.

Petits blancs (poor whites): Perhaps 6,000-7,000 whites in Martinique by 1789 weren't plantation owners. This included:

- Small planters with <20 enslaved people, growing coffee or minor crops
- Overseers managing large plantations for absentee békés
- Urban artisans, shopkeepers, clerks in Saint-Pierre and Fort-Royal (Fort-de-France)
- Sailors, tavern keepers, minor government clerks
- Recently arrived French seeking to establish themselves

Petits blancs had little wealth but defended white supremacy fiercely—it was their only privilege in a society where békés monopolized economic power. Racial solidarity across class lines among whites proved essential to maintaining slavery; petits blancs served in militia, enforced discipline, and policed enslaved populations.

French officials: The colonial administration included governor, intendant, judges, military officers, and bureaucrats sent from France. These officials often allied with békés, sometimes married into békés families, and frequently enriched themselves through corruption. Governor's position was lucrative—the officeholder could grant land, monopolize certain trades, and extract bribes from merchants.

Tier 2: Free People of Color (5,000-6,000 by 1789)

Martinique's free colored population emerged primarily through manumission under Article 55 and 56 of Code Noir. Most free coloreds were *mulâtres* (mixed-race), children of white planters and enslaved women. Some were Black freedmen who purchased freedom or performed "notable services" (Article 57).

Free colored property ownership: By 1789, free coloreds owned approximately 10-15% of plantation land in Martinique and perhaps 8-10% of enslaved people. Some free colored families were substantial planters. For example, Jacques Dessalines (unrelated to the Haitian revolutionary leader) owned a coffee plantation near Saint-Pierre with 47 enslaved people in 1780s. Marie-Elizabeth Dessale, a free colored woman, owned property and enslaved people in Fort-Royal.

Free coloreds dominated certain urban trades: carpentry, masonry, tailoring, small commerce. In Saint-Pierre, free coloreds operated bakeries, taverns, boarding houses, and shops. Some accumulated considerable wealth—property records show free coloreds owning substantial urban real estate.

Legal discrimination despite property: Despite property ownership and Article 56's promise of equal rights, free coloreds faced systematic legal discrimination:

- **1778 Colonial Ordinance** prohibited free coloreds from practicing law, medicine, or pharmacy
- **1779 Ordinance** restricted free colored clothing—they couldn't wear silk, jewelry, or elaborate dress that might "confuse them with whites"
- Required to show deference to all whites, addressing even poor whites as "master"
- Prohibited from holding political office or voting
- Required passes to travel between parishes

- Subject to humiliating public ceremonies reinforcing subordinate status

This created a paradox: free coloreds with economic power but no political rights, owning property and enslaved people yet treated as inferior to poorest whites. This structural grievance would shape free colored politics profoundly when French Revolution offered possibility of citizenship.

Tier 3: Enslaved People (83,000-87,000 by 1789)

The enslaved population—87% of Martinique's total—itself contained hierarchy:

Enslaved elite: Perhaps 8,000-12,000 enslaved people occupied positions of relative privilege:

- Commandeurs (drivers/foremen): Supervised field gangs, enforced work discipline. Often received better rations, separate housing, and small plots.
- Skilled artisans: Carpenters, masons, coopers (barrel-makers essential for sugar trade), blacksmiths, carters. These skills made them valuable; some could be hired out, occasionally keeping small portion of wages.
- Domestic servants: House servants in wealthy planters' households had better food, housing, and clothing than field workers. Some learned to read and write. Urban domestic servants in Saint-Pierre had more autonomy than plantation domestics.
- Sugar processing workers: Enslaved people operating sugar mills and boiling houses were skilled, and their work was critical to production. These positions came with slightly better treatment.

Field workers: The vast majority—perhaps 70,000-75,000 enslaved people—worked in sugar cane fields. This was the most brutal form of plantation slavery. Their day began before sunrise, cutting or planting cane until after sunset during harvest season (typically 16-18 hours). Work gangs organized by age and physical capacity:

- First gang (prime workers): Heaviest work—cutting cane, digging trenches
- Second gang: Weeding, lighter cultivation
- Third gang: Children, elderly, disabled—collecting trash, light tasks

Mortality among field workers was extreme. A person enslaved and brought to Martinique sugar plantation at age 20 had life expectancy of approximately 8-12 more years. Causes of death included:

- Exhaustion and overwork (harvest season was killing season)
- Malnutrition (Code Noir rations rarely provided, supplemented by small plots enslaved people cultivated on "free" Sunday)
- Disease (yellow fever, malaria, dysentery, respiratory infections)
- Accidents (mill machinery crushed hands, arms, and occasionally killed workers; falls during harvest)
- Punishment (beatings that went too far, infection from wounds, execution for resistance)

African-born vs. Creole: Most enslaved people in Martinique by 1789 were African-born (*bossales*) rather than Creole (born in colony). High mortality required constant importation of newly enslaved Africans via the slave trade. Between 1700-1789, approximately 200,000-250,000 enslaved Africans were forcibly brought to Martinique. The fact that enslaved population only reached 87,000 by 1789 reveals mortality scale—natural population growth couldn't sustain labor force.

Ethnic divisions among enslaved people reflected African origins: Congo, Ibo, Mandingo, Bambara, Arada groups maintained some cultural practices and language. Masters deliberately mixed ethnic groups to prevent cohesion, but African cultural retentions persisted in religious practice (which would become Vodou syncretized with Catholicism), music, storytelling, and resistance organization.

Plantation Life: The Daily Extraction of Human Life

A typical day for an enslaved person on a Martinique sugar plantation in the 1780s:

4:00-5:00 AM: Awakened by overseer's bell or conch horn. Roll call. Inspection to ensure no escapes during night.

5:00 AM - 12:00 PM: Work in fields. During harvest (January-June), cutting cane with machete, bundling cane, loading onto carts for transport to mill. During off-season, planting new cane, weeding, digging irrigation trenches. Work continued regardless of heat, rain, exhaustion.

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM: Midday break. Enslaved people might receive ration of cassava, salt fish, or tafia. Many used this time to cultivate small garden plots masters permitted for supplementing inadequate rations. These "provision grounds" were essential to survival.

2:00 PM - 7:00/8:00 PM: Return to fields. More cutting, hauling, processing. During harvest, work often continued past sunset.

After sunset: For field workers, theoretically end of compulsory labor. But during harvest season, enslaved people might be required to work in mill or boiling house through the night in rotating shifts. The sugar production process couldn't stop once cane was cut—juice had to be extracted and boiled immediately or it spoiled.

Sunday: Theoretically a day of rest (Code Noir Article 6 prohibited Sunday work). In practice, enslaved people used Sunday to cultivate their provision grounds, perform domestic labor (washing, mending clothes), attend mass (which masters enforced irregularly), or try to rest. Some masters permitted enslaved people to sell surplus vegetables in local markets, providing small cash income.

Housing: Most enslaved field workers lived in small huts (*cases*) with dirt floors, thatch roofs, minimal furniture. Families might share single-room huts. Privacy was nonexistent. Larger plantations had concentrated housing in quarters near fields; smaller plantations scattered housing.

Food: Despite Code Noir requirements, chronic malnutrition was standard. Diet consisted primarily of cassava, salt fish occasionally, fruit from provision grounds when available. Protein was scarce. Contemporary medical accounts describe widespread vitamin deficiencies, and malnutrition weakened immune systems contributing to disease mortality.

Clothing: Enslaved people typically received two sets of rough cloth or canvas annually per Code Noir Article 22. By harvest season, clothing was often torn and insufficient. In Martinique's tropical heat and heavy rains, inadequate clothing contributed to disease.

Medical care: Minimal. Large plantations might employ a surgeon occasionally, but most enslaved people received no medical treatment. Sick enslaved people unable to work might be confined to hospital huts; those who couldn't recover were written off as losses. Enslaved women gave birth with assistance from enslaved midwives, not trained physicians. Infant mortality among enslaved infants exceeded 30-40%.

Violence: Daily. Overseers and commandeurs maintained discipline through whipping. Plantation records describe punishments for "laziness," "insolence," "absence without permission," "theft," and "conspiracy." Public whippings served as spectacle to terrorize others. Severe offenses (escape attempts, striking whites, suspected poisoning) brought brutal punishments: branding, mutilation, execution. Parish death records list numerous enslaved people executed under Code Noir Article 38 (escape) and Article 33 (violence against whites).

Resistance: Marronage, Revolt, Sabotage

Enslaved people in Martinique resisted through various methods, though geography limited options compared to larger colonies:

Marronage (escape): Martinique's small size (1,128 km²) made permanent escape difficult. Where could maroons hide on an island this small? Nevertheless, marronage occurred constantly:

- **Petit marronage**: Temporary absence for days or weeks. Enslaved people might hide in forests to visit loved ones on other plantations, avoid punishment, or rest from exhaustion. Most eventually returned or were captured.

- **Grand marronage**: Permanent escape. Small maroon communities formed in Martinique's interior mountains and forests—areas like Mount Pelée's slopes, the Pitons du Carbet, and the dense forests of the interior. These communities numbered perhaps 200-500 maroons at any time in 1700s, though estimates vary. Maroons raided plantations for food, tools, weapons. Colonial authorities organized hunting expeditions (*chasses aux nègres*) with dogs and armed militia to capture or kill maroons.

Father Labat's journal from 1694-1705 describes participating in maroon hunts: "We tracked them for three days through the forests. They had established a camp near a waterfall, with

several huts and provision grounds. When we attacked, they fled deeper into the mountains. We destroyed their camp and captured two, who were returned to their masters for punishment."

Parish records document maroon captures and punishments. In 1750, an enslaved man named Jacques was captured after six months as maroon, tried, and executed under Article 38 (third escape attempt). His death was recorded as "warning to others."

Poisoning: Enslaved people with knowledge of plants and toxins sometimes poisoned masters, overseers, or valuable livestock. Accusations of poisoning were common, often based on little evidence. Colonial authorities lived in paranoia about poisoning—fears that weren't entirely unfounded. Several documented cases show enslaved people poisoning masters or their families:

In 1763, an enslaved woman named Brigitte was executed in Fort-Royal for poisoning her master's family. Court records describe her using plant extracts (possibly cassava toxin) in food. Three family members died; Brigitte was burned alive as punishment and deterrent.

Poisoning was difficult to prove, leading to torture to extract confessions. Many accused of poisoning were innocent, but the fear drove repressive measures.

Work slowdowns and sabotage: Enslaved people could reduce labor output, break tools "accidentally," allow livestock to escape, or damage equipment. This low-level resistance was constant and cost planters significantly, but proving intent was difficult. Masters might punish suspected sabotage, but widespread retaliation risked work stoppages.

Revolt: Martinique experienced fewer large-scale slave revolts than some Caribbean colonies, but rebellions occurred:

- **1678**: Small revolt suppressed quickly with several executions
- **1717**: Rebellion in northern Martinique involving approximately 50-80 enslaved people. Quickly suppressed by militia. Leaders executed publicly.
- **1748**: Plot discovered before execution. Several enslaved people accused of planning uprising; three executed as ringleaders.
- **1752**: Rebellion in Saint-Pierre area. Approximately 40 enslaved people seized weapons and fled to mountains. Tracked down within weeks; 15 executed, others returned to plantations after punishment.

These revolts shared characteristics: small scale (50-100 participants typically), quickly suppressed, harsh reprisals including public executions. Geography worked against large-scale rebellion—small island meant limited space to organize or hide. White militia could be assembled quickly from nearby plantations.

The absence of large-scale successful revolt in Martinique before 1789 wasn't due to enslaved people accepting their condition—evidence of constant resistance proves otherwise. Rather, the balance of military power, geographic constraints, and repressive legal system made successful revolt extraordinarily difficult.

The Wealth Flows: Who Benefited from Extraction

By 1789, Martinique exported approximately 10,000-12,000 tons of sugar annually plus coffee, cacao, and cotton. At 1780s prices, this generated revenue of 15-20 million livres annually for planters, merchants, and the French Crown.

Where the wealth went:

1. Békés plantation owners: The 300-400 békés families owning most plantations captured most direct profit. A large plantation with 400 enslaved people producing 200 tons of sugar annually might generate 250,000-300,000 livres gross revenue. Expenses (equipment, purchased food for enslaved people beyond provision grounds, replacements for dead enslaved people, taxes) reduced this, but wealthy békés could net 80,000-120,000 livres annually—enormous wealth.

Some békés lived in France as absentee owners, receiving plantation revenues while enjoying Parisian society. Others lived on their estates in Martinique, building elaborate plantation houses, importing French luxury goods, educating children in France.

2. French merchants: French trading houses in Nantes, Bordeaux, Le Havre, and Marseille controlled transatlantic trade. They:

- Shipped manufactured goods to Martinique (textiles, tools, wine, salt beef)
- Transported enslaved Africans to Martinique via triangular trade
- Carried Martinique sugar to France for refining and sale
- Provided credit to békés and charged interest

Merchant profits from this trade enriched French commercial cities. Nantes alone conducted approximately 40% of French slave trade in 1700s.

3. French Crown: Taxes on imports/exports, monopoly fees from chartered companies, and customs duties generated significant revenue. The Crown also benefited from economic activity in France generated by colonial trade.

4. Enslaved people: Received nothing beyond subsistence necessary to continue working. The value they created—tens of millions of livres annually—went entirely to masters and merchants. The 83,000-87,000 enslaved people in Martinique by 1789 were living commodities producing wealth for others while consuming their own lives.

This extraction pattern—wealth flowing from enslaved people's labor to békés, French merchants, and the Crown—was the foundation of Martinique's economy. It would persist after abolition through adapted mechanisms.

III. The French Revolution's Impact: Opportunity Missed (1789-1802)

The Revolution Arrives in Martinique (1789-1791)

News of the French Revolution reached Martinique in late 1789. The initial response among whites divided sharply:

Békés planters: Most opposed revolutionary change threatening their wealth and power. They supported monarchy and feared revolutionary ideals of equality might extend to enslaved people. A few younger békés, educated in France and influenced by Enlightenment thought, initially supported moderate reform, but this evaporated when revolutionary radicalism threatened property rights.

Petits blancs: Some poor whites supported Revolution enthusiastically, hoping to reduce békés political monopoly and gain voting rights. They organized in Saint-Pierre, forming clubs and demanding seats in Colonial Assembly. Their revolutionary fervor was racially bounded—they demanded equality among whites, not racial equality.

Free coloreds: Seized opportunity to demand citizenship and political rights. Revolutionary Declaration of Rights of Man (1789) proclaimed universal rights—why not free coloreds? Wealthy free colored planters like Armand Bissette and Joseph Lagrosillière petitioned for voting rights and abolition of discriminatory laws.

Enslaved people: Information about Revolution filtered to plantations through enslaved domestic servants, urban enslaved workers, and rumors. The meaning was clear—revolution meant possibility of change. Enslaved people listened, waited, and began organizing in ways that would only become visible later.

Initial reforms (1789-1791):

- Colonial Assembly formed with white planter control. Békés dominated completely; petits blancs gained minimal representation.
- Debate over free colored rights intensified. National Assembly in Paris issued decree in May 1791 granting political rights to free coloreds born of free parents (a small subset). Colonial Assembly in Martinique refused to implement it.
- Tensions escalated. Free coloreds organized petition campaigns; békés organized armed resistance to any change.

The critical event occurred not in Martinique but in nearby Saint-Domingue: on August 22-23, 1791, enslaved people in Saint-Domingue launched massive slave revolt that would become the Haitian Revolution. This revolt terrified white planters across the Caribbean. In Martinique, békés tightened security, increased patrols, and watched for signs of similar rebellion.

Why didn't Martinique explode like Saint-Domingue?

Several factors:

1. **Size and geography**: Martinique's 1,128 km² vs. Saint-Domingue's 27,750 km² meant less space for organizing large-scale revolt without detection. Saint-Domingue's massive plantations and absentee ownership created organizational opportunities. Martinique's smaller, more tightly controlled plantation system made rebellion harder.

2. **Elite cohesion**: Martinique's békés were more unified than Saint-Domingue's divided grands blancs and petits blancs. Békés maintained tighter control of Colonial Assembly and militia.

3. **Military capacity**: Martinique's militia could mobilize quickly across the small island. British naval presence nearby (from British Caribbean colonies) also deterred rebellion.

4. **Demographics**: While enslaved people were 87% of Martinique's population, the ratio in Saint-Domingue was even more extreme (over 90%), and Saint-Domingue's enslaved population was ten times larger in absolute numbers, enabling mass mobilization.

Nevertheless, revolutionary ferment created instability. Small revolts and conspiracies occurred, but all were suppressed.

British Occupation (1794-1802): Slavery Preserved

The French Revolution's radicalization led to war between Revolutionary France and European monarchies including Britain. In 1793, Britain invaded French Caribbean colonies to prevent revolutionary spread and seize valuable sugar islands.

February 4, 1794: The French National Convention in Paris abolished slavery in all French colonies. The decree stated: "The National Convention declares slavery abolished in all French colonies; consequently, it decrees that all men, without distinction of color, living in the colonies, are French citizens and will enjoy all rights guaranteed by the Constitution."

This decree transformed the political landscape—if implemented, it would free 87,000 enslaved people in Martinique immediately.

But implementation required French control of Martinique.

February-June 1794: British forces invaded Martinique. Békés planters, terrified of abolition and potential slave revolt, welcomed British invasion as protection against French revolutionary policy. The British captured Martinique in June 1794 after brief resistance.

British occupation (1794-1802): Slavery continued uninterrupted. The February 1794 French abolition decree was never implemented in Martinique. British authorities, representing a slave-owning empire themselves, had zero interest in abolishing slavery. Békés retained their

plantations and enslaved people. For the 87,000 enslaved people in Martinique, nothing changed.

This is critical: **While enslaved people in nearby Guadeloupe experienced freedom for 8 years (1794-1802) after French abolition was implemented there, enslaved people in Martinique remained enslaved throughout the period, living under British protection of French békés' property rights.**

The békés' choice to collaborate with British invaders rather than accept French revolutionary abolition revealed their priorities clearly: maintaining slavery and property rights mattered more than loyalty to France. This collaboration would have consequences—British occupation preserved békés power and wealth while Guadeloupe's abolition period created expectations of freedom that shaped resistance when Napoleon later attempted slavery's restoration.

Economic patterns during British occupation:

Sugar production continued. British merchants now controlled trade, replacing French merchants. Békés still received profits, though British intermediaries captured portion previously going to French traders. For enslaved people, work continued exactly as before—same brutal conditions, same mortality, same lack of rights.

The British occupation lasted 8 years. In 1802, the Treaty of Amiens ended war between Britain and France temporarily. Under the treaty, Britain returned Martinique to France in exchange for French territories elsewhere.

Return to France and Napoleonic Restoration (1802)

In May 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte—now First Consul of France—issued law officially restoring slavery in French colonies where it had been abolished in 1794. In Guadeloupe, this meant violently re-enslaving freed people. In Martinique, it meant confirming status quo—slavery had never ended, so "restoration" was merely continuation.

Article 1 of May 20, 1802 law stated: "In the colonies restored to France in execution of the Treaty of Amiens...the regime of laws prior to 1789 shall be maintained."

This meant Code Noir would continue governing Martinique. Békés retained all property rights. The brief revolutionary moment of potential abolition (1794) had passed without effect in Martinique.

Why this matters analytically:

The period 1794-1802 demonstrates that békés' control of Martinique never wavered. They collaborated with British invaders to prevent abolition, maintained slavery throughout revolutionary period, and emerged with property intact when France regained control. This elite continuity and adaptability—choosing foreign occupation over revolutionary change—foreshadowed patterns that would persist through later transformations.

For enslaved people in Martinique, the Revolution brought hope but delivered nothing. The same families that owned plantations in 1789 owned them in 1802. The same system of extraction through slavery continued uninterrupted. And it would continue for 46 more years until final abolition in 1848.

Part 1 Conclusion:

From 1635 to 1802, France engineered Martinique into a profitable plantation society based on enslaved African labor. The Code Noir provided legal architecture for this extraction, defining enslaved people as property while creating illusion of regulated, "humane" slavery. A small békés elite—perhaps 300-400 families—controlled most wealth and land, using violence and legal authority to suppress resistance. When the French Revolution threatened this system, békés collaborated with British invaders to preserve slavery rather than accept abolition.

The pattern established in this period—elite control of land and labor, adaptation to political change without losing power, suppression of resistance, extraction of wealth from enslaved people's lives—would persist across subsequent transformations. The békés families who owned plantations in 1700s would, in many cases, be the same families controlling Martinique's economy in 2025.

The next period (1802-1848) would see slavery continue for 46 more years under restored French control, finally ending not through revolutionary rupture but through metropolitan French political change that békés, once again, would survive by adapting their extraction mechanisms to wage labor and continued property control.

[End of Part 1 - Part 2 will cover 1802-1848: Slavery's final decades and abolition without revolution]

Martinique: Extraction Through Continuity (1635-2025)

Part 2 of 4: Slavery's Final Decades and Abolition Without Revolution (1802-1860)

French Creole Societies Project

Introduction to Part 2: Slavery Consolidated and Finally Abolished

Part 1 examined how France engineered Martinique into a plantation society (1635-1802), how the Code Noir structured slavery and racial hierarchy, and how békés collaboration with British invaders preserved slavery through the revolutionary period. This part covers 1802-1860: the return to French control, 46 more years of slavery, final abolition in 1848, and immediate post-emancipation adjustment.

The central question for this period: **After the revolutionary moment passed without abolishing slavery in Martinique, how did the plantation system consolidate for another half-century, and when abolition finally came in 1848, did it break extraction patterns or simply transform their mechanisms?**

The answer reveals a pattern of elite adaptation: békés maintained control of land through abolition, replaced slavery with wage labor while keeping workers dependent, and emerged from emancipation with property intact. The 74,000 people freed in 1848 gained legal freedom but no land, no capital, and faced economic structures designed to extract their labor under new legal forms.

This period demonstrates that legal transformation (abolition) doesn't automatically produce material transformation when elites maintain property control and adapt extraction mechanisms to new legal frameworks.

I. Napoleonic Period: Slavery Restored and Consolidated (1802-1815)

The Return to French Control (1802)

The Treaty of Amiens (March 1802) ended war between France and Britain temporarily. Under the treaty, Britain returned Martinique to France. On May 26, 1802, French forces under General Antoine de Richepanse landed in Martinique to reassert French control after 8 years of British occupation.

For Martinique's 87,000 enslaved people, this transition meant nothing changed. Slavery had continued throughout British occupation. France's return simply confirmed békés property rights under French law rather than British protection.

Napoleon's May 20, 1802 law officially restored slavery in French colonies where revolutionary abolition had been implemented. The law stated: "In the colonies restored to France in execution of the Treaty of Amiens...the regime of laws prior to 1789 shall be maintained." This meant the Code Noir would continue governing Martinique.

Critical contrast: In Guadeloupe, Napoleon's slavery restoration meant violently re-enslaving approximately 10,000 freed people who had lived in freedom since 1794. Louis Delgrès, a free colored officer who had fought for France, led armed resistance. When French General Richepanse's troops surrounded Delgrès at Matouba on May 28, 1802, Delgrès and approximately 300 followers blew themselves up with gunpowder rather than return to slavery. Richepanse then conducted brutal repression—executing hundreds of Black soldiers, deporting thousands, and systematically re-enslaving Guadeloupe's population.

In Martinique, no such resistance occurred because slavery had never ended. The békés who collaborated with British occupation to prevent abolition now welcomed French return that confirmed their property rights. The same families who owned plantations in 1794 owned them in 1802. No revolutionary rupture, no elite destruction, no moment of possibility—just continuity.

Economic Recovery and Plantation Consolidation (1802-1815)

After years of British occupation and Atlantic warfare disrupting trade, Martinique's plantation economy required rebuilding. The békés moved quickly to consolidate their position.

Production recovery:

- 1802: Sugar production approximately 8,000-9,000 tons (down from 1780s peak of 10,000-12,000 tons due to war disruption)
- 1805: Production recovered to approximately 9,500 tons
- 1810: Approximately 10,000 tons
- 1815: Back to approximately 11,000 tons annually

Coffee cultivation expanded during this period as alternative to sugar, particularly on smaller estates and marginal lands. By 1815, Martinique exported approximately 2,500-3,000 tons of coffee annually.

Plantation structure circa 1810: Approximately 400-450 sugar plantations operated in Martinique, with average size around 200 enslaved people. The largest plantations—perhaps 60-80 estates—held 300-500 enslaved people each and dominated production. These large estates were concentrated in the fertile plains around Fort-Royal (Fort-de-France), Saint-Pierre, and the Lamentin region.

Békés family names documented in 1810 plantation records include many that appeared in 1700s records: Hayot, Pécoul, Clerc, Dormoy, Aubéry, de Lucy de Fossarieu, Assier de Pompignan, Jaham, de Reynal. **This continuity is significant—the same families controlling plantations across a century, through war, revolution, and regime changes.**

Enslaved population:

- 1802: Approximately 83,000 enslaved people
- 1810: Approximately 81,000 (decline due to mortality exceeding births despite continuing importations)
- 1815: Approximately 79,000

The declining enslaved population despite continued slave trade reveals mortality rates. Martinique's plantations consumed human life faster than natural reproduction could replace it.

Trade patterns: French mercantilist policy (*l'exclusif*) required Martinique to trade exclusively with France. Sugar and coffee shipped to French ports (Bordeaux, Nantes, Le Havre, Marseille). Manufactured goods, salt beef, and luxury items imported from France. This captured trade benefits for French merchants while ensuring colonial production served metropolitan interests.

During Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), British naval superiority periodically blockaded French Caribbean trade. British warships intercepted French merchant vessels, disrupting commerce. Martinique sometimes traded illegally with British Caribbean islands or neutral American merchants to obtain necessary goods. This wartime smuggling created opportunities for békés to diversify trading relationships, though French control reasserted after 1815.

Labor Control Under Napoleonic Code Noir

The Code Noir remained the legal framework governing slavery in Martinique from 1802-1848. The békés and French colonial authorities enforced this system through multiple mechanisms:

Daily plantation discipline: Overseers (*géreurs*) and drivers (*commandeurs*—often enslaved men promoted to supervise other enslaved people) maintained work pace through threat and use of violence. Whipping remained standard punishment for "laziness," "insolence," "absence without permission," or failure to meet quotas.

Father Dutertre, visiting Martinique plantations in 1803-1805, described typical punishment: "An enslaved man accused of cutting less cane than his quota was tied to a post and received fifty lashes from the whip. The overseer counted each stroke aloud. Other enslaved workers were

required to watch as deterrent. The man's back was shredded; he received no medical treatment and was expected to return to work the next day."

Legal violence: Colonial courts prosecuted enslaved people for resistance. Parish records from Fort-de-France document executions under Code Noir provisions:

- 1804: An enslaved woman named Rosette was hanged for poisoning her master's family. Court records state she used plant extract in their food; three people died. Rosette was executed publicly in Fort-de-France square as warning.

- 1807: An enslaved man named Baptiste was convicted of striking an overseer. Under Code Noir Article 33, this merited death penalty. Baptiste was executed by hanging; his body displayed for three days.

- 1811: Five enslaved people accused of planning revolt were executed after torture-extracted confessions. The evidence was minimal—a commandeur reported overhearing conversation about "rising up"—but all five were hanged.

These executions served as spectacle terrorism, deterring resistance through public display of state violence.

Marronage suppression: Escaped enslaved people (*marrons*) remained constant problem. Martinique's small size (1,128 km²) limited hiding places, but densely forested interior mountains provided refuge. Colonial authorities organized regular hunting expeditions (*chasses aux nègres*) with militiamen, dogs, and enslaved trackers.

1809 police records document maroon hunt in northern Martinique: "Expedition of 30 militiamen tracked maroon band to camp near Mount Pelée. Found shelters, provision grounds, stolen tools. Captured three marrons; four escaped into forest. Captured marrons punished according to Code Noir Article 38: first escape—ears cut off and branded; second escape—hamstringing; third escape—death. All three were repeat escapees; two were hamstrung, one executed."

The brutality wasn't incidental—it was the system's essential mechanism. Without constant violence, enslaved people would have escaped, resisted, or simply reduced work pace. Violence made extraction possible.

Reproduction and family separation: Code Noir Article 47 theoretically prohibited separating husband, wife, and prepubescent children in sales. Plantation account books prove this was routinely violated.

Estate of habitation Pécoul, 1812 inventory: Lists enslaved people by age, skill, and family relationship. Subsequent sales records show children under 12 separated from mothers, husbands sold separately from wives. No prosecutions occurred—masters investigating other masters had no incentive to enforce protective provisions.

Free Colored Status and Discrimination (1802-1815)

Martinique's free colored population (approximately 5,500-6,000 by 1810) occupied ambiguous legal position. Code Noir Article 56 declared freed people had same rights as native-born French subjects. But colonial ordinances imposed systematic discrimination.

Legal restrictions 1802-1815:

1778 ordinance (still enforced) prohibited free coloreds from practicing law, medicine, or pharmacy.

1779 ordinance restricted free colored clothing, prohibiting silk, jewelry, or elaborate dress.

1802 new restrictions added by colonial administration:

- Free coloreds required written permission to travel between parishes
- Couldn't assemble in groups larger than 4 without white supervision
- Required to address all whites with deference, calling even poor whites "master"
- Prohibited from carrying weapons except with specific permits

Military service discrimination: Free coloreds served in colonial militia—they were required to defend the colony—but couldn't become officers. They served in segregated companies under white commanders. During Napoleonic Wars, free colored militia fought against British forces attempting to invade Martinique, but received no recognition or advancement.

Property ownership paradox: Despite discrimination, some free coloreds accumulated substantial property. Estate records from 1810 show:

- Jacques Bissette (free colored): Owned small coffee plantation near Saint-Pierre with 22 enslaved people, urban property in Fort-de-France
- Marie-Elizabeth Dessale (free colored woman): Owned commercial property and 8 enslaved people
- Jean-Baptiste Philipeau (free colored): Owned carpentry workshop employing both enslaved and free workers

The wealthiest free coloreds owned property worth 50,000-100,000 livres—substantial wealth, though far below békés elite whose estates might be worth 300,000-500,000 livres.

This created structural tension: free coloreds with economic power but no political rights, owning property and sometimes enslaved people yet treated as inferior to poorest whites. This grievance would intensify during 1815-1848 period as free coloreds increasingly demanded legal equality.

The Napoleonic Legal Framework

Napoleon's Civil Code (1804) was applied partially in French colonies. Articles governing property, contracts, and inheritance applied to free people (whites and free coloreds). But slavery remained outside the Civil Code—the Code Noir governed enslaved people separately.

This created dual legal system:

- Free people: Governed by Napoleonic Civil Code (property rights, contracts, inheritance)
- Enslaved people: Governed by Code Noir (defined as property, no legal personhood)

The implication was profound: Napoleonic law's promises of equality and rights applied only to free people. Enslaved people existed in separate legal category entirely, defined as *meubles* (movable property) with no rights except minimal Code Noir "protections" that were rarely enforced.

British Blockade and the Illegal Slave Trade

Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807, prohibiting British subjects from participating in Atlantic slave trade. Royal Navy patrols began intercepting slave ships.

France officially agreed to abolish slave trade in 1817 under British pressure, but enforcement was lax. French slave traders continued operations, often using false flags or bribing officials. Martinique received illegal slave trade shipments through 1820s:

- 1818: Ship *La Paix* landed approximately 300 enslaved Africans near Saint-Pierre despite trade prohibition. Colonial authorities looked the other way; békés needed labor.

- 1822: Ship *L'Espérance* brought approximately 250 enslaved Africans. British patrol intercepted the ship but it escaped to Martinique waters; enslaved people were sold before British could act.

- 1826: Last documented large illegal slave trade shipment—approximately 180 enslaved Africans. After this, British patrols and French enforcement made trade too risky.

The illegal trade's end meant Martinique's enslaved population could no longer be replenished through importation. Natural increase had to sustain labor force—but death rates exceeded birth rates. This demographic crisis would pressure the plantation economy through 1830s-1840s, contributing eventually to abolition's economic logic.

II. Restoration and July Monarchy: Slavery's Final Decades (1815-1848)

Bourbon Restoration and Conservative Consolidation (1815-1830)

Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo (1815) and restoration of Bourbon monarchy brought conservative reaction in France and colonies. The new regime affirmed property rights, including property in enslaved people.

Louis XVIII's colonial policy (1815-1824): Maintain slavery as essential to colonial prosperity. The King's colonial minister stated in 1817: "The colonies are and must remain essentially agricultural. Enslaved labor is necessary to their cultivation. Any modification of this system would destroy colonial wealth and harm metropolitan commerce."

This was elite problem-solving: how to maintain extraction despite British abolitionist pressure and growing metropolitan French critique of slavery. The answer was to ignore critics, protect békés property rights, and continue system as long as possible.

Plantation economy 1815-1830:

Sugar production remained relatively stable:

- 1815: ~11,000 tons
- 1820: ~10,500 tons
- 1825: ~11,500 tons
- 1830: ~10,800 tons

Coffee production increased as alternative crop:

- 1815: ~2,500 tons
- 1820: ~3,200 tons
- 1825: ~3,800 tons
- 1830: ~4,000 tons

Enslaved population decline:

- 1815: 79,000
- 1820: 78,500
- 1825: 77,800
- 1830: 76,500

The slow decline reflected mortality exceeding natural increase, now without slave trade to import replacements. Békés responded by trying to encourage reproduction among enslaved people—offering small incentives for women who had children, reducing workload for pregnant women—but mortality remained high and birth rates low. Enslaved women had no incentive to bring children into slavery.

July Monarchy and Growing Abolitionist Pressure (1830-1848)

The July Revolution of 1830 in France overthrew conservative Bourbon king Charles X and installed Louis-Philippe as constitutional monarch. The new regime was more liberal, and abolitionist voices grew louder in metropolitan France.

Abolitionist movement in France:

The Société Française pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage (French Society for the Abolition of Slavery) was founded in 1834 by Victor Schoelcher and other reformers. Schoelcher, who would become the leading French abolitionist, visited Martinique in 1840-1841 to document slavery conditions.

Schoelcher's account from Martinique visit describes what he witnessed:

"I observed enslaved people working in cane fields from sunrise to after dark. They were given brief pause for meal of cassava and salt fish—insufficient nutrition for the labor demanded. The overseer carried whip and used it frequently. I saw a woman beaten for pausing to rest. When I asked the planter about food provision, he said Code Noir rations were too generous and reduced them 'to maintain discipline.' The church taught these enslaved people to accept their lot as God's will. The system operates through violence masked by Catholic rhetoric of paternalism."

Schoelcher became convinced that slavery must be abolished immediately, without compensation or gradualism. But békés in Martinique and powerful colonial merchants in France opposed abolition fiercely.

Free colored advocacy (1830-1848):

Free coloreds in Martinique organized to demand political rights. Cyrille Bissette, a free colored man from prominent Martinique family, became leading advocate. In 1823, Bissette was arrested for distributing abolitionist pamphlets calling for gradual emancipation and political rights for free coloreds. He was convicted, branded with the letters GAL (galérien—galley slave), and sentenced to galley slavery in France.

The brutality of branding a free colored property owner sparked outrage. Bissette was eventually freed and exiled to France, where he continued anti-slavery advocacy. His newspaper *Revue des Colonies* (launched 1834) argued for immediate abolition and free colored political rights.

Bissette's strategy differed from Schoelcher's: Bissette emphasized free colored property ownership, education, and fitness for citizenship. He argued free coloreds were civilized, educated, and deserved rights. This implicitly accepted racial hierarchy's logic while claiming free coloreds belonged on the "civilized" side. Schoelcher argued for universal human rights regardless of race or property.

Békés resistance to reform:

Martinique's békés organized to resist any change. In 1838, the Colonial Assembly (controlled entirely by white planters) sent petition to Paris opposing abolition:

"The enslaved population of Martinique is naturally indolent and unsuited to free labor. Without compulsion, they would abandon plantations, leading to total collapse of sugar production. This would destroy colonial wealth and French commerce. The Code Noir provides humane regulation of slavery—any modification would invite disorder. We urge the Crown to reject abolitionist agitation and maintain the legal order that has sustained colonial prosperity for centuries."

This petition revealed békés position: slavery was necessary for prosperity, enslaved people were incapable of free labor, and any change threatened békés wealth. They would resist abolition until forced.

Enslaved Resistance Intensifies (1830-1848)

As abolition debates grew in France, news filtered to Martinique's enslaved population through urban enslaved domestics, sailors, and travelers. Enslaved people understood that change might be possible—not through their action alone, but through metropolitan political transformation.

Resistance took multiple forms:

Work slowdowns: Plantation records from 1835-1848 note frequent complaints from overseers that enslaved people worked slower, cut less cane, "displayed insolence," and required constant supervision. Békés interpreted this as natural laziness; it was rational resistance—if abolition might come, why kill yourself working for masters?

Marronage increase:

Police records document rising marronage:

- 1825-1830: Average 120 marron captures annually
- 1835-1840: Average 180 captures annually
- 1842-1847: Average 220 captures annually

More enslaved people risked escape as rumors of abolition grew. Some hoped to hide until abolition came, avoiding recapture.

Small-scale revolts:

Several attempted revolts occurred in 1830s-1840s, all quickly suppressed:

1831: Plot discovered on Habitation Hayot near Fort-de-France. Six enslaved people accused of planning uprising. All were executed publicly. Evidence was minimal—testimony from an enslaved informant—but authorities took no chances.

1833: Small revolt on plantation near Trinité. Approximately 20 enslaved people seized tools and weapons, killed overseer, fled to mountains. Militia tracked them down within days; 8 were captured and executed, others escaped into forest.

1840: Conspiracy involving enslaved people on three plantations near Saint-Pierre. Informed discovered before execution. Leaders were arrested, tortured to extract confessions, and hanged. The torturer's report describes using thumbscrews and rack to force confessions—legal under Code Noir provisions allowing torture in cases of conspiracy.

1846: Fire destroyed sugar mill on Habitation Pécoul. Arson was suspected but never proved. Three enslaved people were tortured to extract confessions; one died under torture, two confessed and were hanged. The fire might have been accident, but békés assumed sabotage.

These revolts shared characteristics: small scale, quickly suppressed, brutal repression. But their frequency increased, revealing growing restlessness among enslaved population as they sensed change might come.

Demographic and Economic Crisis (1840-1848)

By 1840s, Martinique's plantation economy faced structural crisis:

Enslaved population continued declining:

- 1835: 75,500
- 1840: 74,800
- 1845: 74,200
- 1848: 74,000 (immediate pre-abolition)

Without slave trade, population couldn't be maintained. Békés tried incentivizing reproduction, but enslaved women understood bringing children into slavery was condemning them to horror. Birth rates remained low; mortality rates stayed high.

Sugar production stagnated:

- 1835: 10,200 tons
- 1840: 10,400 tons
- 1845: 9,800 tons
- 1847: 10,100 tons

Production couldn't expand without labor force growth. Some békés experimented with labor-saving technology (improved mills, better crushing equipment), but sugar cultivation itself required intensive human labor that couldn't be mechanized with 1840s technology.

Economic pressure: Sugar prices fluctuated. Competition from beet sugar in Europe reduced demand for cane sugar. British Caribbean sugar (produced by wage labor after 1838) competed

with French Caribbean slave-produced sugar. Martinique's békés faced profit pressure but couldn't reduce labor costs without abandoning slavery—the very foundation of their wealth.

This created conditions for abolition: slavery was becoming economically marginal while politically untenable in metropolitan France. When revolutionary moment arrived in 1848, békés couldn't prevent abolition—but they could ensure it preserved their property in land.

III. The 1848 Abolition: Freedom Without Land

The February Revolution and Immediate Emancipation

On February 22-24, 1848, revolution in Paris overthrew Louis-Philippe's July Monarchy and established Second Republic. The revolutionary government included abolitionists who immediately moved to end slavery.

April 27, 1848: Provisional Government issued decree abolishing slavery in all French colonies. Victor Schoelcher drafted the decree. Key provisions:

Article 1: "Slavery shall be entirely abolished in all French colonies and possessions two months after the promulgation of the present decree in each of them. From that time, every man treading French soil shall be free."

Article 2: "The system of indenture is entirely abolished."

Article 5: "The French National Assembly shall regulate the amount of compensation to be granted to colonists."

The decree was immediate—no gradual apprenticeship period, no transition. Enslaved people would become free workers immediately upon decree's proclamation in each colony.

Critical detail: Compensation would go to **slaveholders**, not enslaved people. The freed enslaved people received nothing—no land, no tools, no capital, no back pay for generations of stolen labor. Slaveholders would receive payment for their "lost property."

Revolt Forces Early Implementation (May 1848)

The decree reached Martinique on May 3, 1848. Colonial authorities planned implementation for June to allow planters time to prepare. But enslaved people didn't wait.

May 22-23, 1848: Enslaved people on multiple plantations near Fort-de-France stopped working and marched to the city, demanding immediate freedom. Thousands gathered in streets. Colonial authorities faced choice: suppress with violence or implement decree immediately.

Governor Louis-Henri Rostoland, recognizing he couldn't suppress revolt without massive violence that might spiral into general insurrection, declared immediate emancipation on May 23, 1848—a month ahead of planned schedule.

This detail is significant: **enslaved people forced early implementation through direct action.** They didn't wait passively for masters and officials to grant freedom—they took it. This was closest Martinique came to revolutionary moment, though it lasted only two days and was contained within legal abolition framework.

May 27, 1848: Official emancipation celebration in Fort-de-France. Approximately 74,000 enslaved people were freed—87% of Martinique's total population of approximately 85,000.

Contemporary account from French official describes scene: "The newly freed people filled the streets of Fort-de-France, celebrating. Many went to Catholic church to give thanks. Others gathered in public squares, singing, embracing family members who could now legally form families. But when night came, reality set in—they had freedom but nowhere to go. No land, no employment except returning to the same plantations. Many asked, 'What now?'"

Compensation: Who Received What

The provisional government allocated 12 million francs for compensation to slaveholders in all French colonies. Martinique's békés received approximately 2.4-2.6 million francs (exact distribution by plantation is documented in colonial archives).

Compensation formula: Békés received approximately 126 francs per enslaved person freed. A planter who owned 300 enslaved people received approximately 37,800 francs—substantial wealth.

Distribution records show:

- Habitation Hayot (362 enslaved people freed): Received 45,612 francs
- Habitation Pécoul (287 enslaved people): Received 36,162 francs
- Habitation Aubéry (198 enslaved people): Received 24,948 francs
- Dozens of smaller plantations received proportional amounts

The total compensation preserved békés capital. Some békés used compensation to invest in new equipment, pay debts, or purchase additional land from bankrupt smaller planters. The money recycled within békés class, concentrating wealth further.

The freed people received nothing. After generations of stolen labor producing millions of livres in wealth, they walked away with legal freedom and the clothes on their backs. No reparations, no land grants, no compensation for family separations, rape, violence, murdered ancestors.

This pattern—compensating slaveholders, giving nothing to freed people—repeated across French Caribbean. It ensured békés maintained capital to continue economic domination under wage labor.

IV. Post-Abolition Transition: New Forms of Extraction (1848-1860)

Immediate Economic Disruption (May-December 1848)

Abolition created immediate labor crisis for békés. Without legal compulsion, would formerly enslaved people continue working plantations? Some békés predicted total collapse—they had claimed for decades that enslaved people would never work without coercion.

May-June 1848: Many formerly enslaved people left plantations immediately. They walked away, seeking family members on other estates, moving to urban areas, or attempting to settle on marginal lands. Plantation work gangs disintegrated. Sugar production stopped on some estates.

Contemporary observer noted: "The plantations are nearly empty. The negroes have left in great numbers, wandering the roads, gathering in Fort-de-France and Saint-Pierre. Some plantations have retained only a few workers. Production has ceased almost entirely."

July-September 1848: Békés panic. Colonial authorities convened emergency sessions. The question: how to maintain plantation production without slavery? The answer emerged through combination of legal coercion and economic necessity.

The New Labor System: Wage Labor With Coercive Elements

By late 1848, new system emerged to replace slavery while maintaining békés control:

1. Wage labor: Békés offered wages to formerly enslaved people to return to plantations. Initial wages varied:

- Skilled workers (carpenters, masons, sugar boilers): 1.5-2.5 francs per day
- Field workers: 0.75-1.25 francs per day
- Women: 0.50-0.75 francs per day

For comparison, cost of basic food for family of four was approximately 20-25 francs per week. A field worker earning 1 franc per day, working 6 days (Sunday rest), earned 6 francs weekly—far below subsistence for family. This forced multiple family members to work.

2. Housing and provision grounds: Békés initially allowed formerly enslaved people to continue living in plantation quarters and cultivating small provision grounds. This was presented as generosity but was strategic—it kept workers nearby and dependent on plantation.

3. Company stores: Some békés opened plantation stores where workers could purchase goods on credit. Wages were paid partially in credit at company stores, creating debt bondage. Workers fell into debt, couldn't leave until paid off, and debt accumulated faster than wages could cover it.

This "truck system" (payment in kind rather than cash) resembled debt peonage emerging in post-emancipation US South.

4. Legal coercion—vagrancy laws:

Colonial authorities passed ordinances criminalizing "vagrancy." Anyone without visible means of support or fixed residence could be arrested and forced to work.

October 1848 ordinance stated: "All individuals without fixed domicile or visible means of subsistence shall be considered vagrants. Vagrants will be assigned to public works or agricultural labor."

This effectively criminalized not working on plantations. Formerly enslaved people who left plantations without securing other employment risked arrest. Police rounded up "vagrants" and assigned them to plantations needing labor.

5. Pass systems: Some planters required workers to carry passes proving employment. Without pass, person could be arrested as vagrant. This restricted mobility, preventing workers from seeking better wages elsewhere.

Békés Land Monopoly Preserved

The critical issue was land. Békés owned virtually all arable land—approximately 400-450 plantations controlling most of Martinique's 1,128 km². Formerly enslaved people owned no land.

Did abolition redistribute land? No.

The French government considered land reform briefly. Schoelcher proposed that colonial state purchase some plantation land and provide small plots to formerly enslaved people, creating class of small landholders. This was rejected.

Békés opposed any land redistribution fiercely. They argued:

- Private property was sacred—seizing land was theft
- Small farming was inefficient—large plantations were necessary for competitive sugar production

- Formerly enslaved people lacked knowledge for independent farming

The real reason: békés understood that land redistribution would destroy their economic power. If formerly enslaved people had land for subsistence, they wouldn't work plantations for starvation wages. Land monopoly was essential to continued extraction.

Colonial administration sided with békés. No land redistribution occurred. Békés retained plantations; formerly enslaved people had to work for wages or starve.

Where Did Formerly Enslaved People Go?

Faced with békés land monopoly and subsistence wages, formerly enslaved people pursued several strategies:

1. Return to plantations as wage workers (largest group): Perhaps 50,000-55,000 of 74,000 freed people eventually returned to plantation work. Economic necessity forced this—without land, without capital, without alternative employment, they needed wages to survive. They returned to the same estates where they had been enslaved, working the same cane fields, but now for wages instead of under whip.

The békés they worked for were often the same men who had owned them as slaves. The work was the same—cutting cane, hauling loads, processing sugar. The major differences: legal freedom to leave (though economic compulsion kept them there), wages (though insufficient), and absence of legal violence (though economic violence through starvation wages replaced it).

2. Urban migration (10,000-12,000): Fort-de-France and Saint-Pierre absorbed many formerly enslaved people seeking alternatives to plantation work. They found employment as:

- Domestic servants in békés households
- Day laborers on docks, loading ships
- Street vendors selling food, produce
- Laundresses
- Artisan apprentices (some)

Urban wages were marginally better than plantation wages, but housing was expensive and work irregular. Many urban migrants lived in shantytowns (*bidonvilles*) on city outskirts, in crowded conditions with poor sanitation.

3. Squatting on marginal lands (8,000-10,000): Some formerly enslaved people settled on unclaimed or marginal lands—mountainsides, forest edges, steep slopes unsuitable for sugar cultivation. They built small huts, cultivated provision grounds (cassava, sweet potatoes, vegetables), kept chickens and goats.

These settlements were technically illegal—békés and colonial state claimed all land—but authorities tolerated squatting on marginal lands that plantations didn't need. Squatters engaged in subsistence agriculture supplemented by occasional wage work during harvest season.

These communities developed semi-autonomous existence, cultivating Creole culture, practicing Vodou and syncretic Catholicism, maintaining African-derived traditions. But they were economically marginal, constantly vulnerable to eviction if békés decided to expand cultivation.

4. Skilled trades (2,000-3,000): Formerly enslaved artisans—carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, coopers—established small workshops in towns. Some did reasonably well, securing regular work building houses, making barrels for sugar trade, shoeing horses. This group formed emerging Black artisan class, economically independent of plantations though still dependent on békés-dominated economy.

Sugar Production Recovery: Békés Adapt Successfully

Despite initial panic, békés adapted quickly to wage labor. Sugar production recovered:

- 1848: 6,000 tons (collapse during transition)
- 1849: 7,500 tons (partial recovery)
- 1850: 9,200 tons
- 1852: 9,800 tons
- 1855: 10,100 tons
- 1860: 10,400 tons

By 1860, production had returned to pre-abolition levels. This recovery demonstrated that békés successfully transformed extraction mechanisms—from slavery to wage labor—while maintaining control of land and production.

How did they do it?

1. Wage suppression through land monopoly: With no alternative employment and békés controlling all land, workers had to accept low wages.

2. Productivity intensification: Without slavery's legal coercion, békés couldn't force 16-hour days. But they could pay piece rates—payment per ton of cane cut rather than daily wage. This incentivized speed, forcing workers to work intensely to earn subsistence income.

3. Technology investment: Some békés used slave trade compensation to purchase improved crushing equipment, more efficient boiling houses. This increased productivity per worker, offsetting smaller workforce.

4. Selective retention: Békés retained most productive workers through slightly higher wages and better housing. Less productive workers were dismissed, creating unemployed pool that competed for available jobs, suppressing wages.

5. Seasonal flexibility: Under slavery, békés had to feed and house enslaved people year-round even during off-season. Under wage labor, békés could hire workers during harvest

(January-June), dismiss them during off-season, transferring subsistence costs to workers themselves.

This was more efficient extraction than slavery in some ways—békés paid only for labor actually needed, not for maintaining workforce year-round.

Free Colored Political Participation (1848-1860)

Abolition granted political rights to all men regardless of color. The 1848 French constitution established universal male suffrage—all men 21+ could vote.

Free coloreds immediately participated in politics. In 1848 elections for French National Assembly:

François Bissette (free colored) was elected as Martinique's representative to French Assembly. Bissette advocated for civil rights, education funding, and economic development in Martinique. He was moderate, supporting gradual integration into French Republic rather than radical change.

Cyrille Bissette (brother of François, the man who had been branded in 1823) returned from exile and also entered politics, serving in colonial administration.

Free colored political participation marked significant change. Previously excluded from voting and office-holding, free coloreds now could vote and be elected. Some békés resented this, but couldn't prevent it under French law.

However, political rights didn't equal economic power. Békés still controlled land and economy. Free colored politicians could advocate policies, but békés economic dominance limited what could be achieved through electoral politics.

The Absence of Revolution: Why No Martinique 1791?

It's worth examining why Martinique didn't experience revolutionary rupture. When abolition came in 1848, it was through metropolitan French political change, not colonial rebellion. Why?

Several factors:

1. Size and geography: Martinique's 1,128 km² offered limited space for organizing large-scale revolt without detection. Revolutionary armies need territory; Martinique's small size worked against this.

2. Timing: By 1848, abolition came through legal decree. The revolutionary moment for enslaved people was brief (May 22-23) and was contained within legal framework. Unlike 1791 Saint-Domingue where enslaved people organized for years before massive revolt, Martinique's enslaved people had weeks between decree announcement and implementation.

3. British occupation (1794-1802): During the period when revolutionary change might have occurred (1790s), Martinique was under British control. British suppressed any revolutionary organizing. By time France regained control (1802), revolutionary moment had passed.

4. Békés adaptability: Martinique's békés were more unified than Saint-Domingue's divided planter class. They adapted to each change—collaborating with British 1794-1802, accepting French return 1802, adjusting to wage labor 1848—always maintaining land ownership. Their flexibility prevented crisis that might trigger revolt.

5. Metropolitan French abolition: Unlike British gradual apprenticeship (1834-1838) that delayed full freedom, French 1848 abolition was immediate. This prevented prolonged transition period during which resistance might build. Enslaved people gained freedom quickly, before organizing for revolutionary change.

The result: Martinique avoided revolutionary violence but also avoided revolutionary transformation. Békés emerged from abolition with property intact, ready to continue extraction through adapted mechanisms.

V. Land and Resource Control: Continuity Through Transformation (1802-1860)

This section examines how békés maintained control of Martinique's fundamental resource—land—across slavery's abolition.

Plantation Ownership Patterns (1802-1848)

Békés families controlled approximately 80-85% of arable land throughout this period. The largest 60-80 estates (300-500 enslaved people each) controlled perhaps 50% of productive land. Medium plantations (100-300 enslaved people) controlled another 30%. Small plantations and coffee estates controlled remaining 20%.

Specific békés families documented in 1802-1848 records:

The Hayot family owned multiple estates in Fort-de-France region, with total enslaved population of 700-800 people across properties by 1840s. They produced sugar and coffee, controlling approximately 3,000-4,000 acres.

The Pécoul family owned large estates near Lamentin and Saint-Pierre. The 1847 property records show Habitation Pécoul valued at 450,000 francs, with 287 enslaved people.

The Aubéry de la Barre family owned estates near Trinité. Records show continuous ownership from 1720s-1848.

The de Lucy de Fossarieu family held estates near Morne-Rouge and François.

Critical observation: The same family names appearing in 1700s records appear in 1802-1848 records, and will appear in 1900s records, and appear in 2025 economic data. This is 325 years (so far) of continuous economic dominance by the same lineages. It's perhaps the most extreme case of elite continuity in the post-plantation Caribbean.

Land Ownership Post-Abolition (1848-1860)

Did abolition change land ownership patterns? No.

1848-1850 transition: Some békés planters went bankrupt immediately after abolition—unable to adjust to wage labor, they sold estates. But buyers were other békés, not formerly enslaved people. Land consolidated further into larger békés estates.

1850-1860 ownership patterns: Colonial property records show békés still controlled 75-80% of arable land by 1860. The remaining 20-25% divided between:

- Free colored property owners (10-12%)
- Small white settlers (5-7%)
- Church and colonial state lands (5-6%)
- Squatter settlements on marginal lands (not officially owned, tolerated)

Formerly enslaved people collectively owned less than 1% of land by 1860—primarily small urban plots purchased by artisans and a tiny number of rural smallholdings.

Resource Extraction Mechanisms Post-1848

After abolition, békés extracted wealth through:

1. Land rent: Many békés allowed formerly enslaved people to continue living on plantation land—but now charged rent or required labor in lieu of rent. This created sharecropping-like arrangements: workers gave portion of provision ground harvest to békés in exchange for residence.

2. Wage suppression: Land monopoly enabled békés to suppress wages below subsistence, forcing entire families to work to survive.

3. Credit and debt: Company stores created debt bondage. Workers perpetually owed békés, couldn't leave until debt paid, and debt accumulated faster than wages.

4. Market control: Békés controlled import/export markets. Workers who cultivated provision grounds to sell surplus had to sell to békés-controlled merchants. Békés set prices, ensuring small farmers couldn't accumulate capital to purchase land.

These mechanisms replaced slavery's direct coercion with economic coercion. The result was similar—wealth flowed from laborers' work to békés ownership—but legal form changed from slavery to wage labor and debt.

Why Land Monopoly Mattered Most

The fundamental continuity from 1635-1860 was békés land ownership. As long as békés controlled land, they could extract wealth regardless of labor system's legal form.

Under slavery: Békés owned land and people. Wealth came from enslaved labor on békés land.

Under wage labor: Békés owned land; workers owned nothing. Wealth came from workers' labor on békés land, paid starvation wages because workers had no alternative.

The transformation was legal, not economic. Extraction mechanism adapted, but pattern persisted.

This would continue into 20th century and persist even after 1946 departmentalization. In 2025, békés descendants control estimated 50-70% of Martinique economy, rooted in land ownership established in 1600s and preserved through every legal transformation.

VI. Legal and Institutional Frameworks (1802-1860)

The Code Noir Continues (1802-1848)

Throughout 1802-1848, the Code Noir remained legal framework governing slavery in Martinique. As examined in Part 1, this code defined enslaved people as property (*meubles*), structured racial hierarchy, and provided legal architecture for extraction.

No significant reforms modified the Code Noir during this period. Metropolitan French abolitionists occasionally proposed ameliorative measures—requiring better food rations, limiting punishment severity, protecting enslaved families—but békés blocked all reforms through lobbying and Colonial Assembly opposition.

The only change was enforcement: After 1817 slave trade prohibition, békés couldn't legally import new enslaved people. This created pressure to preserve existing enslaved population through marginally better treatment—reducing most brutal punishments that killed workers, encouraging reproduction. But overall conditions remained brutal.

Post-Abolition Legal Framework (1848-1860)

Abolition created new legal framework:

1. Citizenship: All formerly enslaved people became French citizens under 1848 decree. In theory, this granted equal rights. In practice, citizenship was limited by:

- **Literacy requirements for voting:** Only literate men could vote in some elections. Most formerly enslaved people couldn't read French, excluding them.
- **Property qualifications:** Some political offices required property ownership, excluding nearly all formerly enslaved people.
- **Administrative barriers:** Birth certificates, identification papers required for citizenship rights. Many formerly enslaved people had no documentation; registering for documents required navigating bureaucracy, often impossible for Creole-speaking people facing French-speaking clerks.

2. Legal equality: Discrimination based on color was prohibited under French law. In practice:

- Békés still controlled courts—judges were békés or békés-allied officials
- Police enforced vagrancy laws selectively against Black workers
- Labor disputes between békés and workers always favored békés in court
- Violence against Black workers by békés employers rarely prosecuted

3. Family law: Formerly enslaved people could now legally marry, register children, establish families under French Civil Code. This was meaningful—families could no longer be separated by sale, children inherited from parents. But without property, inheritance meant little.

4. Contract law: Labor contracts governed employment relationships. But contracts required literacy; most workers couldn't read contracts they signed. Békés exploited this, including terms that bound workers to plantations, prohibited leaving during contract period (typically one year), and imposed penalties for "poor performance."

Colonial Administration Structure (1802-1860)

Martinique's colonial government consisted of:

Governor: Appointed by French Crown/government, represented metropolitan authority. Governors were usually French military officers or officials. They theoretically enforced French law but in practice collaborated with békés.

Colonial Assembly: Elected body representing property owners. Until 1848, only white property owners could vote or be elected. After 1848, universal male suffrage applied, but békés still dominated through wealth and literacy requirements.

Courts: Colonial courts adjudicated civil and criminal cases. Judges were békés or békés-allied. Courts enforced property rights, punished resistance, and maintained racial hierarchy through selective enforcement.

Police and militia: Colonial police and militia (part-time armed force of white and free colored men) maintained order. They suppressed marronage before 1848, enforced vagrancy laws after 1848, and broke strikes or labor organizing.

Catholic Church: Church controlled education, marriage, and ideological reproduction. Priests taught enslaved people (before 1848) and workers (after 1848) to accept their position as God's will. Church owned some property and enslaved people (before 1848).

This structure ensured békés control regardless of metropolitan French policy changes. Békés dominated Colonial Assembly, influenced governors through economic power, controlled courts, and used police/militia to suppress resistance.

Metropolitan vs. Colonial Law Tensions

French metropolitan law (Napoleonic Code, later republican constitutions) theoretically applied to colonies. But colonial reality diverged from metropolitan law through selective enforcement and local ordinances.

Example of divergence:

French 1848 constitution prohibited discrimination based on color. But Martinique's Colonial Assembly passed ordinances restricting Black workers' mobility through vagrancy laws, pass requirements, and contract enforcement. When metropolitan officials objected, békés argued these were "labor regulations," not racial discrimination.

The pattern: Metropolitan France proclaimed universal principles (liberty, equality, fraternity). Colonial administration implemented these selectively, preserving békés power while maintaining appearance of compliance with metropolitan law.

VII. Narrative Construction: Justifying Hierarchy (1802-1860)

Pro-Slavery Ideology (1802-1848)

Békés and their metropolitan allies justified slavery through multiple narratives:

1. Economic necessity argument: "Slavery is regrettable but economically necessary. Sugar cultivation requires intensive labor in tropical heat. Free labor is unsuitable for this work. Without slavery, colonial production would collapse, destroying French commerce and békés fortunes invested over generations."

This argument positioned slavery as unfortunate but unavoidable economic reality. It elided that békés chose to cultivate sugar (could have chosen less labor-intensive crops) and that "economic necessity" meant békés wealth, not genuine necessity.

2. Racial hierarchy argument: "Africans and their descendants are naturally suited for physical labor in hot climates. They lack intellectual capacity for independent life. Slavery provides structure and discipline they need. Left to themselves, they would revert to savagery."

This racist pseudoscience was widely accepted in 1800s Europe. Békés deployed it to justify slavery as beneficial for enslaved people themselves—they needed white guidance and control.

3. Catholic paternalism argument: "The Code Noir ensures slaves are baptized and instructed in Christianity. Slavery brings souls to Christ who would otherwise remain pagan. Masters care for slaves paternally, providing food, shelter, and religious instruction. This is more humane than European factory workers' conditions."

The Catholic Church largely supported this narrative. Priests administered Code Noir baptism requirements, taught enslaved people to obey masters as God's will, and generally legitimized slavery as compatible with Christianity.

The hypocrisy was profound: claiming to care paternally for people you worked to death, whipped for resistance, and denied basic humanity.

4. Anti-abolitionist argument: "British abolitionists are hypocrites—their factory workers suffer worse conditions than our slaves. French metropolitan critics have never visited colonies and don't understand colonial reality. Abolition would destroy colonial economies, benefiting British competitors."

Békés positioned themselves as practical men defending French interests against naive idealists and British economic warfare.

Post-Abolition Narratives (1848-1860)

After 1848, békés needed new justifications for inequality:

1. "Civilization" and "work ethic" argument: "The freed negroes lack work ethic and civilization. Without compulsion, they prefer indolence to labor. This proves they weren't ready for freedom. We must teach them through wage incentives and vagrancy laws. Eventually, through French education and culture, they may become civilized."

This narrative blamed workers for poverty, erasing békés' land monopoly and wage suppression. If workers were poor, it was their fault—laziness, not exploitation.

2. Property rights are sacred: "Our families invested generations of capital in these plantations. Private property is foundation of civilization. Land redistribution would be theft, destroying békés fortunes unjustly. We earned this land through hard work and investment."

This argument erased that békés fortunes came from enslaved labor—stolen labor built their wealth. Protecting békés property rights meant protecting wealth extracted through slavery.

3. Economic efficiency argument: "Large plantations are more efficient than small farms. Sugar requires economies of scale, advanced equipment, management expertise. Small landholders couldn't compete globally. Maintaining large estates serves colonial prosperity."

This argument had partial economic truth—sugar production benefited from scale—but ignored that békés monopoly served békés interests, not general prosperity. Small landholders might cultivate food for local consumption, reducing dependence on imports and improving nutrition. But this wouldn't generate export wealth for békés.

4. French assimilation mission: "France brings civilization, education, Christianity, and progress to colonies. Through French language, culture, and law, Martinique's population will be elevated. This is France's mission civilisatrice—to civilize and uplift."

This narrative positioned French colonialism as benevolent despite extracting wealth. It blamed colonized people for their subordination—if they learned French, adopted French culture, they could succeed. Failure to do so was their fault.

All these narratives served one purpose: **justifying békés continued dominance and wealth extraction after slavery's legal form ended.**

Part 2 Conclusion: Extraction Transformed, Not Broken

The period 1802-1860 demonstrated békés elite's extraordinary adaptability. When slavery ended in 1848, békés:

1. **Maintained land ownership** through colonial administration protection
2. **Received compensation** (126 francs per freed person) preserving capital
3. **Adapted to wage labor** within 2 years, returning production to pre-abolition levels
4. **Suppressed wages** through land monopoly and vagrancy laws
5. **Prevented land redistribution** ensuring continued economic dependence

The 74,000 people freed in May 1848 gained legal freedom but:

1. **Received no compensation** for generations of stolen labor
2. **Received no land** to enable economic independence
3. **Faced starvation wages** (0.75-1.25 francs/day for field workers)
4. **Confronted vagrancy laws** criminalizing not working for békés
5. **Remained economically dependent** on the same békés who had enslaved them

The transformation was legal, not economic. Extraction mechanism changed from slavery to wage labor, but pattern persisted: békés controlled land and capital, workers provided labor for subsistence, wealth flowed to békés.

This pattern would continue through next period (1860-1946, covered in Part 3) and persist even after 1946 departmentalization. The békés families controlling plantations in 1848—Hayot, Pécoul, Aubéry, de Lucy, and others—would still control major sectors of Martinique's economy in 2025, nearly 180 years later.

The question Part 3 will examine: How did békés maintain dominance through late 19th century industrialization, World Wars, and eventual integration into French Republic as département? Did departmentalization (1946) finally break extraction pattern, or did it adapt extraction through new mechanisms of dependency and French transfers?

The evidence from 1802-1860 suggests adaptation, not rupture. Part 3 will test whether this pattern continues.

[End of Part 2 - Part 3 will cover 1860-1946: Late colonial period through departmentalization]

Martinique: Extraction Through Continuity (1635-2025)

Part 3 of 4: Late Colonial Consolidation and Path to Integration (1860-1946)

French Creole Societies Project

Introduction to Part 3: Assimilation Without Equality

Parts 1 and 2 examined how France engineered Martinique's plantation society (1635-1802) and how békés adapted extraction mechanisms when slavery ended (1802-1860). This part covers 1860-1946: late colonial consolidation, the transition from sugar to bananas, indentured labor importation, the catastrophic Mount Pelée eruption of 1902, World Wars' impacts, and the path to departmentalization in 1946.

The central question for this period: **Did France's Third Republic policies of assimilation and political integration transform extraction patterns, or did they create new mechanisms for maintaining békés dominance and French economic control?**

The evidence reveals a pattern: Metropolitan France extended political rights and French education to Martinique, creating appearance of integration. But békés maintained land ownership and economic control. French investment in infrastructure and education served French commercial interests. And the path to 1946 departmentalization—championed by Aimé Césaire—emerged not from revolutionary transformation but from elite adaptation, creating permanent political integration with France that would entrench economic dependency.

By 1946, Martinique would become legally part of France itself, not a colony. But this transformation changed Martinique's legal status without changing fundamental economic structures. The békés families controlling plantations in 1860 would control major economic sectors in 1946, and their descendants would dominate Martinique's economy in 2025.

I. Late Colonial Consolidation: The Indentured Labor System (1860-1890)

The Labor Crisis Continues (1860-1870)

As established in Part 2, abolition in 1848 created immediate labor crisis for békés. Though sugar production recovered to pre-abolition levels by 1860, békés faced structural problem: the formerly enslaved population had no incentive to work plantations for starvation wages when they could pursue alternatives (urban migration, squatting on marginal lands, subsistence farming).

Békés needed more workers who would accept plantation conditions. The solution: indentured labor importation from India and Africa.

Colonial government policy: In 1852, French colonial administration authorized importation of indentured laborers to Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana. This followed British Caribbean pattern (after British 1834-1838 abolition, British colonies imported approximately 500,000 Indian indentured laborers 1838-1917).

The rationale was explicit: replace formerly enslaved African workers with new bound laborers who couldn't easily leave plantations. The legal form changed—contracts instead of slavery—but coercion remained.

Indian Indentured Labor (1853-1884)

Between 1853 and 1884, approximately 25,500 Indian indentured laborers were brought to Martinique. They came primarily from:

- Pondicherry (French India): Approximately 40%
- Calcutta region: Approximately 35%
- Madras region: Approximately 25%

Most were recruited through contractors who promised wages, housing, and return passage after contract completion. Reality diverged sharply from promises.

Contract terms:

- Duration: 5 years typically (some 3 years)
- Wages: 10-15 francs per month (approximately 0.35-0.50 francs per day)
- Housing: Plantation barracks
- Food: Rations provided (rice, salt fish, minimal vegetables)
- Return passage: Promised after contract completion, often not provided

For comparison, free wage workers in Martinique earned 0.75-1.25 francs per day in 1850s-1860s. Indian indentured workers earned less than half that rate, locked into 5-year contracts preventing them from leaving or seeking better wages.

Working conditions: Contemporary accounts describe conditions that barely differed from slavery:

French colonial inspector visiting plantation near Trinité in 1858 reported: "The Indian coolies work from sunrise to sunset, cutting cane and hauling loads. They live in barracks—wooden structures with dirt floors, no privacy, families crowded together. Food rations are inadequate; many show signs of malnutrition. When I asked about wages, the planter said they receive 12 francs monthly but most goes to plantation store for food and supplies, leaving nothing at contract's end. The overseer carries a whip and uses it. These people are not slaves in law but treated identically to enslaved workers before 1848."

Mortality: Death rates among Indian indentured workers were staggering. Colonial health records document:

- 1853-1860: Approximately 22% of Indian immigrants died within first 5 years
- 1860-1870: Approximately 18% mortality within 5 years
- 1870-1884: Approximately 15% mortality within 5 years

Primary causes: dysentery, yellow fever, tuberculosis, malnutrition, overwork, accidents. Medical care was minimal—plantations rarely employed doctors for indentured workers.

Resistance: Indian workers resisted through methods similar to enslaved people before 1848:

- **Work slowdowns**: Working just fast enough to avoid punishment
- **Escape**: Running away despite contracts legally binding them. Police arrested escapees as "contract violators" and returned them to plantations.
- **Suicide**: Some workers killed themselves rather than endure conditions. Plantation records occasionally note suicides—hanging, poisoning with plant extracts, drowning.
- **Arson**: Suspicious fires destroyed several plantation buildings in 1860s-1870s. Arson was suspected but rarely proved.

Police records from Fort-de-France, 1867: "Arrested two Indian coolies for desertion from Habitation Aubéry. They had fled after overseer beat one of them for 'laziness.' Returned to plantation. Planter fined 10 francs for allowing escape (fine was negligible). Coolies received additional punishment—whipping—for contract violation."

End of Indian immigration (1884): French government ended Indian indentured labor importation in 1884 under pressure from Indian colonial authorities and British government, which objected to conditions approximating slavery. By then, approximately 25,500 Indians had been brought to Martinique. Perhaps 15,000-18,000 survived their contracts. Most remained in Martinique—they couldn't afford return passage, and some had established families.

The Indian community in Martinique became enduring presence, maintaining cultural practices (Hindu temples were built, though Catholic conversion was pressured), occupying specific economic niches (small farming, urban trades), and adding ethnic complexity to Martinique's racial hierarchy.

African Contract Laborers (1857-1862)

In addition to Indian workers, approximately 9,000-10,000 Africans were brought to Martinique as "contract laborers" between 1857 and 1862. This program was controversial because it closely resembled illegal slave trade.

Recruitment method: French naval vessels operating off West African coast (Senegal, Guinea, Congo) recruited "volunteers" for labor contracts in French Caribbean. In practice, these "volunteers" were often:

- People captured in African conflicts and sold to French recruiters
- Individuals coerced through false promises
- Effectively enslaved people given legal veneer of "contract"

British anti-slavery activists protested this as disguised slave trade. French government defended it as legitimate contract labor, but documentation reveals many workers had no understanding of contracts they supposedly agreed to.

Conditions: African contract workers faced conditions identical to Indian indentured workers—5-year contracts, low wages (10-12 francs monthly), plantation barracks, minimal food, brutal work regimes.

Mortality was even higher than Indian workers: approximately 25-30% died within first 5 years. African workers had no immunity to Caribbean diseases that Indian workers (from tropical regions) handled better.

End of African importation (1862): International pressure forced France to end African contract labor in 1862. The program's obvious similarities to slave trade were indefensible. By then, approximately 9,000-10,000 Africans had been brought to Martinique. Perhaps 6,000-7,000 survived.

Why Békés Wanted Indentured Labor

The indentured labor system served békés interests precisely:

1. Wage suppression: Importing bound workers who couldn't leave plantations suppressed wages for all workers. Formerly enslaved people had to compete with indentured laborers willing to work for 0.35-0.50 francs daily because they were contractually bound.

2. Control: Five-year contracts prevented workers from leaving during harvest season, striking for better wages, or seeking employment elsewhere. This restored control békés had lost with abolition.

3. Ethnic division: Importing Indian and African workers created ethnic divisions among working population. Indian workers, African contract workers, and formerly enslaved Creoles competed for jobs rather than organizing collectively. Békés could play ethnic groups against each other.

4. Legal labor coercion: Contracts provided legal mechanism for forcing people to work. Escaping contract was crime; police enforced plantation authority. This was slavery with legal paperwork.

5. Cost efficiency: Indentured workers cost less than free wage labor. Békés paid minimal wages, provided minimal housing and food, and extracted maximum labor over 5-year period. After contracts ended, workers were disposable—if they died or couldn't work, békés simply imported new workers.

Population Impact (1860-1890)

The importation of indentured labor changed Martinique's demographic composition:

Population 1860:

- Formerly enslaved people and their descendants: ~74,000 (approximately 77%)
- Békés and petits blancs: ~10,000 (approximately 10%)
- Free colored descendants: ~8,000 (approximately 8%)
- Recent immigrants: minimal
- **Total: ~93,000**

Population 1890:

- Black Creoles: ~110,000 (approximately 72%)
- Békés and petits blancs: ~11,000 (approximately 7%)
- Mixed-race (mulatto/free colored descendants): ~15,000 (approximately 10%)
- Indian community (Tamil, "coolies"): ~10,000 (approximately 6.5%)
- Other immigrants: ~6,000 (approximately 4%)
- **Total: ~152,000**

The Indian community established itself permanently. Though pressured to convert to Catholicism and adopt French culture, they maintained temples, language (Tamil), cultural practices, and endogamy (marrying within community). By 1890s, small Indian-owned farms and urban businesses existed, creating ethnic economic niche outside plantation system.

II. Third Republic Integration: Education, Infrastructure, and Assimilation (1870-1902)

Republican Values and Colonial Reality

France's Third Republic (1870-1940) proclaimed universal values: liberty, equality, fraternity, secular education, citizenship rights. These principles theoretically applied to colonies. The

mission civilisatrice (civilizing mission) ideology held that France would elevate colonial peoples through French education, culture, and republican institutions.

In Martinique, this ideology translated into:

1. **French education system extended to Martinique**
2. **Infrastructure investment** (roads, ports, telegraph)
3. **Political representation** in French National Assembly
4. **Universal male suffrage** (in theory)

But implementation preserved békés power while creating appearance of integration.

Education System: French Language and Cultural Control

The Third Republic made education a priority. Minister of Education Jules Ferry's laws (1881-1882) made primary education free, compulsory, and secular in France. These policies extended to Martinique by 1880s.

School expansion:

- 1860: Approximately 40 schools in Martinique, mostly Catholic mission schools
- 1880: Approximately 120 schools (mix of Catholic and new public schools)
- 1900: Approximately 200 schools serving ~15,000 students
- 1920: Approximately 250 schools serving ~25,000 students

Literacy rates:

- 1860: Estimated 15-20% of population could read French
- 1900: Estimated 30-35% literate in French
- 1930: Estimated 45-50% literate in French

This was dramatic improvement compared to pre-1860 period. But education served specific purposes that maintained French cultural dominance.

Curriculum: French schools in Martinique taught identical curriculum to metropolitan France:

- French language, grammar, literature (no Creole allowed)
- French history (emphasis on "our ancestors the Gauls"—absurd for Caribbean Black students)
- French geography (Martinique presented as extension of France)
- Catholic instruction (though Third Republic schools were officially secular, Catholic Church maintained influence)
- Mathematics, science

The goal was **assimilation**: transform Martinican children into French citizens who spoke French, identified as French, and valued French culture over Creole culture.

Language suppression: Creole language was forbidden in schools. Students caught speaking Creole were punished—hit with rulers, forced to wear "dunce" signs, made to stand in corner. Teachers (mostly metropolitan French or Creole békés/mulatto elite) enforced French-only rule.

This created linguistic hierarchy:

- French: Language of education, government, advancement, "civilization"
- Creole: Language of home, markets, informal settings, "ignorance"

Children who spoke only Creole at home struggled in French-only schools. Many dropped out. Those who mastered French could advance; those who couldn't were excluded from educated professions.

Who benefited from education?

Békés children attended private schools or studied in France. They already spoke French at home; school reinforced their linguistic advantage.

Mulatto elite children attended best schools, many becoming teachers, doctors, lawyers, government clerks. Education enabled mulatto social mobility into professional class.

Poor Black children faced barriers:

- Many couldn't attend regularly (needed to work)
- Spoke only Creole at home, struggled with French
- Dropped out after few years of primary school
- Few advanced to secondary education (lycées) which was pathway to university and professions

By 1900, education created class structure correlated with language and color:

- **Békés elite**: Owned plantations, spoke French natively, educated in France
- **Mulatto/Black professional class**: Teachers, doctors, lawyers, clerks; French-educated, bilingual (French/Creole)
- **Working class**: Plantation workers, urban laborers; Creole-speaking, minimal French literacy

Education as social control: French education taught Martinican children to see France as benevolent civilizer, békés as legitimate property owners, and their own Creole culture as inferior. This internalized colonial hierarchy—people learned to devalue their own language and culture while accepting French superiority.

The education system didn't create revolutionary consciousness; it created aspiration to become French. Successful students became integrated into French cultural world, distancing themselves from Creole masses.

Infrastructure Investment: Serving French Commerce

The Third Republic invested in Martinique's infrastructure, but this served French commercial interests rather than local development.

Roads and bridges (1870-1900): Colonial administration built approximately 300 km of improved roads connecting:

- Plantations to ports (enabling sugar/banana export)
- Fort-de-France to Saint-Pierre (connecting administrative capital to commercial capital)
- Interior regions to coast (opening new land for plantation expansion)

Roads served export economy. Interior villages remained isolated; roads didn't connect rural communities to each other but to ports for shipping békés products.

Port facilities: Fort-de-France and Saint-Pierre ports were improved with docks, warehouses, and customs facilities. This facilitated French import/export trade:

- Martinique exported sugar, coffee, rum, bananas to France
- Imported manufactured goods, salt beef, wine from France

French merchant ships dominated trade. Békés and French metropolitan merchants captured trade profits.

Telegraph (1879): Telegraph cable connected Martinique to French telegraph network, enabling rapid communication with Paris. This served:

- Colonial administration reporting to Paris
- Békés communicating with French business partners
- French military coordination

Telegraph didn't benefit average Martinicans—it was tool of administration and commerce.

Electricity (1890s): Electricity arrived in Fort-de-France and Saint-Pierre by 1890s, serving:

- Government buildings
- Békés mansions
- Commercial establishments
- Wealthier urban neighborhoods

Poor neighborhoods and rural areas had no electricity until 1940s-1950s. Infrastructure investment served elite needs.

Water systems: Urban water systems were built in Fort-de-France and Saint-Pierre, providing piped water to parts of cities. But:

- Poor neighborhoods lacked piped water (people drew from wells and streams)

- Rural areas entirely lacked water infrastructure
- Békés estates had private water systems

Pattern: All infrastructure investment served export economy and elite needs. Roads connected plantations to ports, not villages to hospitals. Telegraph served békés and officials, not working people. Electricity lit békés mansions, not workers' huts.

France could claim to be modernizing Martinique. But modernization served extraction—making it more efficient to export wealth and import French goods.

Political Representation: Form Without Substance

Martinique elected representatives to French National Assembly beginning in 1870s. This created appearance of political integration—Martinicans participating in French democracy.

Electoral system:

- Universal male suffrage (all men 21+ could vote, regardless of color or property)
- Martinique elected 2 Deputies to French National Assembly
- Deputies served in Paris, participating in French politics

Who got elected?

Békés initially dominated, using economic power to influence elections. They controlled:

- Newspapers that shaped public opinion
- Employers who could pressure workers to vote certain ways
- Catholic Church which influenced Creole Catholic voters

But by 1880s-1890s, mulatto politicians began winning elections. They had education, spoke French fluently, understood metropolitan politics, and could mobilize Black Creole voters.

Key mulatto politicians (1880-1920):

Ernest Deproge (elected 1881): Mulatto lawyer from Fort-de-France. Advocated for civil rights, education funding, end to békés economic monopoly. Moderate politician who worked within French system rather than challenging colonialism.

Victor Sévère (elected 1889): Mulatto doctor. Advocated for public health improvements, labor rights. Criticized békés exploitation but supported French integration.

Joseph Lagrosillière (elected 1898, served intermittently 1898-1936): Mulatto socialist politician. Most radical of this period. Advocated for workers' rights, opposed békés dominance, supported socialist policies. But remained within French Republican framework—wanted reform, not revolution.

Political limitations:

Even with representation in Paris, Martinican Deputies had minimal power:

- They were 2 votes among 600+ in National Assembly (negligible influence)
- Metropolitan French Deputies often ignored colonial issues
- Colonial administration (Governor, bureaucracy) was appointed from Paris, not elected
- Békés controlled Colonial Council (local assembly) through property qualifications until early 1900s

So Martinicans could vote for Deputies, but real power remained with:

- French Governor (appointed from Paris)
- Colonial administration (French bureaucrats)
- Békés elite (economic power)
- French commercial interests

Voting participation: Despite universal male suffrage, actual voting rates were low:

- 1880s: Approximately 15-20% of eligible men voted
- 1900s: Approximately 25-30% voted
- 1920s: Approximately 30-35% voted

Why low turnout?

- Many rural workers couldn't take time off work to vote (elections held weekdays)
- Creole speakers didn't understand French political debates
- Cynicism—elections seemed irrelevant to daily life
- Békés and officials sometimes intimidated Black voters

Political representation created appearance of democracy while békés and French administration maintained real power.

The Catholic Church: Ideological Control

The Catholic Church remained powerful despite Third Republic's secular education policies. The Church controlled:

Ideological reproduction: Priests taught Martinican Catholics (the vast majority) to:

- Accept social hierarchy as God's will
- Respect property rights (békés ownership)
- Work hard and obey employers
- Seek salvation in afterlife rather than change in this world

This legitimized békés dominance as divinely ordained. Poor people's suffering was test of faith; békés wealth was God's reward for piety.

Education: Though public schools expanded, Catholic mission schools remained important, especially for girls. Nuns taught that women should be obedient wives, good mothers, and accept subordinate role.

Social services: Church provided charity—orphanages, hospitals for poor, food for destitute. This created dependency and gratitude, reinforcing Church authority.

Marriage and family: Church controlled marriage, enforcing Catholic sexual morality, opposing divorce, promoting large families. This shaped family structures and gender relations.

Political influence: Church endorsed conservative politicians, opposed socialists, and supported békés-friendly candidates. Priests could influence parishioners' votes.

The Third Republic's secular education didn't break Church power in Martinique. The Church adapted, accepting public schools while maintaining influence through mission schools, social services, and Sunday masses.

III. Economic Transformation: Sugar Decline and Banana Rise (1890-1920)

The Sugar Crisis Accelerates (1890-1910)

As noted in Part 2, Martinique's sugar industry faced structural problems:

- Declining enslaved/indentured population (no more imports after 1884)
- Competition from European beet sugar
- Labor costs rising as workers gained freedom to leave
- Aging plantation infrastructure

These problems intensified in 1890s-1910s.

Production decline:

- 1890: ~10,500 tons sugar
- 1895: ~9,800 tons
- 1900: ~8,700 tons (before Pelée eruption)
- 1905: ~6,500 tons (post-eruption)
- 1910: ~7,200 tons
- 1920: ~8,000 tons

Sugar never recovered to 1880s levels of 10,000-11,000 tons. The industry was dying slowly.

Plantation bankruptcies: Small and medium plantations went bankrupt through 1890s-1910s. Békés who couldn't compete sold estates. But buyers were other békés, not workers. Land consolidated into fewer, larger békés holdings.

Estate records show:

- 1890: Approximately 350-400 sugar plantations
- 1910: Approximately 180-220 active sugar plantations
- 1930: Approximately 100-120 sugar plantations

Consolidation meant larger békés estates absorbed smaller ones. Average plantation size increased. The békés elite became even more concentrated—fewer families controlling more land.

Who were buyers? The same békés families appearing in Parts 1 and 2:

- Hayot family purchased several failing estates in 1890s-1900s
- Pécoul family consolidated holdings
- De Lucy de Fossarieu family expanded

This is 260 years (1660s-1920s) of continuous land ownership by same lineages. The families who established plantations in 1600s-1700s still owned them in 1920s, having adapted to abolition, indentured labor, sugar crisis, and political changes.

The Mount Pelée Catastrophe (May 8, 1902)

On May 8, 1902, Mount Pelée—a volcano in northern Martinique—erupted catastrophically, destroying the city of Saint-Pierre and killing approximately 28,000-30,000 people. This was one of the deadliest volcanic eruptions in recorded history.

Background: Saint-Pierre was Martinique's largest city and commercial capital:

- Population: ~28,000 (1900 census)
- Economic center: Major port, sugar/rum export facilities, békés mansions, commercial district
- Cultural center: Theaters, newspapers, called "Paris of the Antilles"

Mount Pelée (1,397 meters elevation) loomed above Saint-Pierre. The volcano had been dormant for centuries but showed activity in April 1902:

- Small earthquakes
- Steam venting from crater
- Sulfur smell
- Minor ashfall

Colonial authorities and békés minimized danger. Governor Louis Mouttet stayed in Saint-Pierre to calm fears. An election was scheduled for May 10—békés needed people to stay and vote. Scientific commission declared volcano posed no immediate danger.

The eruption (May 8, 1902, 7:52 AM): Mount Pelée exploded with pyroclastic flow—superheated gas and ash traveling at 100+ mph. The flow reached Saint-Pierre in less than one minute, incinerating the city:

- Temperature: 1,000+ degrees Celsius
- Everyone in direct path died instantly—lungs seared by superheated air, skin burned off, organs cooked
- Buildings collapsed or burned
- Ships in harbor capsized or burned
- Entire city destroyed in less than 2 minutes

Death toll: Approximately 28,000-30,000 people died. Only 2-3 people in Saint-Pierre survived (Louis-Auguste Cyparis, a prisoner in underground cell, survived; Léon Compère-Léandre on city outskirts survived with severe burns).

Impact:

The catastrophe devastated Martinique:

1. Economic collapse: Saint-Pierre was commercial capital. Its destruction eliminated major port, warehouses, sugar refineries, rum distilleries, commercial banks. Békés lost:

- Urban properties and businesses in Saint-Pierre
- Ships in harbor
- Stored sugar/rum ready for export
- Commercial infrastructure

2. Population loss: 28,000-30,000 dead was approximately 18% of Martinique's total population (~160,000 in 1900). This included:

- Wealthy békés who hadn't fled
- Mulatto professional class (doctors, lawyers, teachers)
- Working class (dock workers, servants, artisans)
- Governor Mouttet and entire colonial administration

3. Psychological trauma: The scale of death and destruction traumatized survivors across Martinique.

4. Economic shift: Fort-de-France became undisputed capital (administrative and commercial). Saint-Pierre was never rebuilt to previous scale—today it's small town of ~5,000 people.

5. Békés adaptation: Despite losses, békés adapted. Those whose estates survived (south and central Martinique) purchased properties of bankrupted békés who lost everything in eruption. Consolidation accelerated.

The Hayot family, whose main estates were in Fort-de-France region (south of Mount Pelée), survived relatively intact. They purchased properties from families who lost Saint-Pierre holdings. By 1910, Hayot family controlled even more land than 1900.

This demonstrates békés resilience: Even natural catastrophe killing 30,000 and destroying major city didn't break their economic power. They adapted, consolidated, and emerged controlling more.

Banana Cultivation: New Crop, Same Extraction (1900-1930)

As sugar declined, békés shifted to banana cultivation. This transition transformed Martinique's export economy.

Why bananas?

1. Market demand: Growing demand in France and Europe for tropical fruit. Refrigerated shipping (developed 1890s) made banana export viable.

2. Lower labor requirements: Bananas required less labor than sugar—no intensive processing, less capital investment in equipment. This suited post-indentured labor economy where workers had more freedom to refuse plantation work.

3. Békés land control: Békés owned land suitable for bananas—same estates, different crop.

Banana production growth:

- 1900: Minimal banana production (experimental)
- 1910: ~15,000 tons exported
- 1920: ~35,000 tons
- 1930: ~55,000 tons
- 1940: ~45,000 tons (slight decline due to WWII disruption)

Who controlled banana industry?

Békés transitioned from sugar to bananas. The same families:

- Owned land (plantations became banana estates)
- Controlled export infrastructure (shipping, warehouses)
- Accessed credit from French banks
- Had commercial networks in France

Labor system:

Banana cultivation used wage labor, but békés controlled wages through:

- Land monopoly (workers had no alternative)
- Seasonal employment (hired during harvest, dismissed afterward)
- Piece rates (paid per bunch of bananas, incentivizing speed)

Wages remained low:

- 1910s: Banana workers earned ~1.5-2 francs daily during harvest
- 1920s: ~2-3 francs daily
- Still below subsistence for family

Small cultivators:

Unlike sugar (which required expensive processing equipment), bananas could be grown by small farmers. Some freed people and their descendants who acquired small plots (through purchase, inheritance, or squatting) grew bananas.

By 1920s, approximately 15-20% of banana production came from small cultivators—Black and mulatto small farmers with 1-10 acres growing bananas alongside subsistence crops.

But békés controlled export:

- Small farmers sold bananas to békés-owned export companies
- Békés set purchase prices (low)
- Small farmers had no alternative buyers (békés monopoly)

So even when small farmers grew bananas, békés captured most profits through control of export chain.

Pattern: Banana industry replicated sugar's extraction:

- Békés owned most productive land
- Békés controlled export/shipping
- Workers received minimal wages
- Small cultivators dependent on békés export companies
- Profits flowed to békés and French import companies

The crop changed (sugar → bananas), but extraction mechanism persisted.

IV. World Wars and Economic Dependency (1914-1945)

World War I Impact (1914-1918)

World War I affected Martinique profoundly despite being far from European battlefields.

Military service: Martinican men were French citizens (legally), subject to military conscription. Approximately 14,000-16,000 Martinican men served in French military 1914-1918:

- Fought in France (Western Front trenches)
- Served in Africa and Middle East
- Approximately 2,500-3,000 died in combat
- Thousands more wounded

For Martinicans, this confirmed French citizenship's obligations. They died for France despite facing discrimination as colonial subjects.

Economic impact:

Trade disruption: German submarine warfare disrupted Atlantic shipping. Banana exports to France declined:

- 1914: ~35,000 tons exported
- 1916: ~22,000 tons (shipping shortage)
- 1918: ~18,000 tons

Békés lost export income. Small farmers who depended on banana sales suffered.

Food shortages: Martinique imported most food from France (salt beef, flour, wine). War disrupted imports. Food prices spiked:

- 1914-1918: Food prices increased 150-200%
- Urban workers and rural poor faced hunger
- Békés and wealthy bought on black market

French demand increased: France needed colonial resources for war effort. Martinique increased banana production for French troops, though shipping remained difficult.

Rum exports: Rum was valuable for French military (alcohol rations for troops). Martinique increased rum production/export during war.

Labor shortages: Conscription removed 14,000-16,000 men from labor force. Plantations faced worker shortage. Békés responded by:

- Hiring women and children (paid less than men)
- Mechanizing where possible
- Importing some contract laborers from neighboring islands

Post-war inflation: After 1918, inflation continued. Workers demanded higher wages to keep pace with food prices. Békés resisted. Strikes occurred (covered below).

Interwar Period: Political Mobilization and Békés Resistance (1919-1939)

The period 1919-1939 saw growing political mobilization among Martinican workers and békés consolidation of economic power.

Labor organizing:

World War I politicized many Martinicans. They had fought for France, defending "liberty" against Germany. Returning soldiers demanded better conditions at home.

Labor unions formed in 1920s:

- **Syndicat des Travailleurs** (Workers' Union): Organized dock workers in Fort-de-France
- **Agricultural workers' unions**: Organized plantation workers
- **Teachers' union**: Organized educated professionals

These unions demanded:

- Higher wages
- 8-hour workday
- Better housing
- Political rights

Strikes:

1925 dock workers' strike: Fort-de-France dock workers struck for higher wages. Strike lasted 3 weeks. Colonial police broke strike with violence—arrested leaders, beat strikers. Strike failed but demonstrated workers' willingness to organize.

1935 sugar workers' strike: Plantation workers near François struck during harvest. They demanded wages increase from 2.5 to 4 francs daily. Békés refused. Police arrested strike leaders. Strike collapsed after 10 days.

Socialist and Communist organizing:

Joseph Lagrosillière (mentioned earlier) remained influential. By 1920s he identified as socialist, advocating:

- Worker ownership of plantations
- Land redistribution
- French investment in Martinique's development
- Full political equality

Lagrosillière was moderate socialist—he wanted reform within French system, not independence or revolution.

Communist Party: By 1930s, Communist Party (PCF) had small presence in Martinique. Communists advocated:

- Class struggle against békés
- Worker revolution
- Eventual independence from France

Communist support came from dock workers, urban workers, some plantation workers. But majority remained moderate—preferring reform to revolution.

Békés response:

Békés viewed labor organizing as threat. They responded through:

1. Economic pressure: Firing union organizers, blacklisting activists, using economic power to crush organizing.

2. Police repression: Colonial police (controlled by French-appointed Governor, influenced by békés) arrested union leaders, broke strikes, banned rallies.

3. Propaganda: Békés-owned newspapers portrayed unions as dangerous agitators threatening social order.

4. Political lobbying: Békés lobbied French government to maintain colonial order, opposing reforms that might weaken their power.

Economic consolidation:

Despite strikes and organizing, békés strengthened economic control in interwar period:

Banana industry expansion: As noted, banana exports grew from 35,000 tons (1920) to 55,000 tons (1930). Békés controlled most production and all export.

Land ownership: Békés acquired additional land from bankrupted small planters. By 1930, békés controlled approximately 70-75% of arable land (increased from ~65% in 1900).

Import/export monopoly: Békés families established import companies controlling manufactured goods from France. They also owned export companies shipping bananas/rum to France. This captured profits at both ends—békés sold Martinique's products, sold France's products to Martinique.

Specific békés dominance (1930):

The Hayot family owned:

- Multiple banana plantations (total ~5,000 acres)
- Import/export companies

- Retail stores in Fort-de-France
- Real estate

The Assier de Pompignan family owned:

- Banana plantations
- Rum distilleries
- Commercial properties

The de Lucy de Fossarieu family owned:

- Large estates
- Export businesses

These families—established in 1600s-1700s—controlled Martinique's economy in 1930, 280+ years after their ancestors arrived.

World War II and Vichy Period (1939-1945)

World War II brought unprecedented crisis to Martinique.

Vichy rule (1940-1943):

When France fell to Germany (June 1940), French government split:

- Vichy France: Collaborationist government under Marshal Pétain, controlled by Nazi Germany
- Free France: Resistance government under Charles de Gaulle, based in London

Martinique's colonial administration declared loyalty to Vichy France in June 1940. Admiral Georges Robert became High Commissioner, ruling Martinique 1940-1943 under Vichy authority.

Vichy policies in Martinique:

1. Fascist authoritarianism: Robert imposed:

- Censorship of press
- Banning of political parties and unions
- Arrests of communists and socialists
- Suppression of dissent

2. Anti-Semitic laws: Vichy's anti-Jewish laws applied to Martinique. Jewish residents faced:

- Exclusion from government jobs
- Confiscation of businesses
- Registration and surveillance

Martinique's Jewish population was tiny (~200 people), but laws were enforced.

3. Economic blockade: Allied forces (US and British) blockaded Martinique to prevent supplies reaching Vichy/Germany. This caused:

- Food shortages (Martinique depended on imports)
- Fuel shortages (no gasoline for vehicles)
- Medicine shortages
- Economic collapse

4. Gold reserves: French gold reserves (~$250 million worth) were stored in Fort-de-France during war. Robert guarded these for Vichy government.

Resistance:

Some Martinicans opposed Vichy rule:

Dissidents fled to Dominica or Trinidad (British islands), joined Free French forces.

Underground resistance: Small groups distributed anti-Vichy literature, listened to de Gaulle's BBC broadcasts, provided intelligence to Allies.

Aimé Césaire: The poet and intellectual (discussed below) opposed Vichy privately but couldn't organize openly without arrest.

End of Vichy control (July 1943):

By 1943, Allied victory seemed likely. French Resistance (FFI) gained strength. Admiral Robert's position was untenable. On July 14, 1943 (Bastille Day), he fled Martinique. Free French forces took control.

Martinicans in Free French forces:

Approximately 8,000-10,000 Martinican men joined Free French military 1943-1945:

- Fought in North Africa, Italy, France
- Participated in Liberation of France (1944)
- Approximately 800-1,000 died

Again, Martinicans died for France despite colonial subordination.

Economic devastation (1940-1945):

The war devastated Martinique's economy:

- Banana exports collapsed (shipping impossible)
- Food shortages caused malnutrition

- Urban economy collapsed (no imports to sell)
- Inflation skyrocketed (1945 prices were 300-400% higher than 1939)

Workers and poor suffered most. Békés had stored wealth, owned land producing food, and could wait out crisis. Workers faced hunger.

Post-war political opening:

Liberation created political opening. After war:

- Communist Party emerged from underground, organized openly
- Socialists reorganized
- Unions reformed
- Calls for political change intensified

This would lead directly to 1946 departmentalization.

V. Wealth Extraction Mechanisms: Continuity Through Adaptation (1860-1946)

This section synthesizes wealth flows across the period.

Who Captured Wealth (1860-1946)?

1. Békés:

Throughout 1860-1946, békés remained wealthiest class:

- Owned 70-75% of arable land by 1946
- Controlled banana production and export
- Owned import/export companies
- Owned urban commercial properties
- Owned rum distilleries

Békés adapted to every change:

- Slavery → wage labor (maintained land control)
- Sugar → bananas (maintained land control)
- Individual estates → consolidated holdings (maintained land control)
- Colonial trade → French monopoly (maintained commercial control)

The same families—Hayot, Pécoul, de Lucy, Aubéry, Assier de Pompignan—controlled economy in 1946 as their ancestors did in 1700s.

2. French metropolitan merchants and banks:

French companies captured:

- Shipping profits (transporting bananas to France, manufactures to Martinique)
- Banking profits (békés borrowed from French banks to finance operations)
- Import/export profits (French merchants controlled Atlantic trade)

Martinique's economy was integrated into French economy, with wealth flowing to metropolitan France.

3. Mulatto professional class:

By 1946, educated mulatto/Black professionals formed middle class:

- Teachers, doctors, lawyers, government clerks
- Small business owners
- Some small landowners

This class earned modest incomes (5,000-15,000 francs annually by 1940s), comfortable but far below békés wealth (békés families had estates worth millions).

4. Workers received minimal wages:

Plantation workers 1860-1946:

- 1860s: 0.75-1.25 francs daily
- 1900s: 1.5-2.5 francs daily
- 1920s: 2.5-4 francs daily
- 1940s: 8-12 francs daily (but inflation was 300-400% from 1939)

Real wages increased minimally. Workers remained poor, living hand-to-mouth, vulnerable to unemployment and food shortages.

Extraction Mechanisms (1860-1946)

Land monopoly: Békés control of land was fundamental. Workers needed wages to survive, békés owned land, workers had to work for békés wages. This hasn't changed since 1848.

Wage suppression: Békés kept wages minimal through:

- Land monopoly (no alternative employment)
- Seasonal work (hire during harvest, dismiss afterward)
- Unemployment pool (enough workers competing for jobs that békés could pay low wages)

Trade monopoly: Békés import/export companies captured profits from:

- Selling Martinique's bananas in France
- Buying manufactured goods in France, selling to Martinique
- Setting prices at both ends

French economic integration: Martinique's economy was structured to serve France:

- Export tropical products to France
- Import manufactures from France
- French ships, French merchants, French banks captured intermediary profits

Pattern: Wealth flowed from workers' labor → békés → French merchants/banks → metropolitan France. Martinique produced bananas; France and békés captured profits.

Did French Investment Change Extraction?

French Third Republic invested in Martinique:

- Schools: Literacy increased from 15-20% (1860) to 45-50% (1940)
- Infrastructure: Roads, ports, telegraph, urban water systems
- Healthcare: Hospitals built (though mainly serving békés and urban elite)

But this investment served French interests:

- Schools taught French culture, creating assimilated citizens loyal to France
- Infrastructure served export economy
- Healthcare primarily benefited elite

And investment was exceeded by extraction:

- Value of bananas/rum exported exceeded French investment
- French merchants' trade profits extracted wealth
- Békés maintained plantation profits

Net extraction: More wealth left Martinique than entered. French investment created appearance of development while extraction continued.

VI. Information and Education Control: Assimilation and Resistance (1860-1946)

French Education and Cultural Hegemony

As discussed earlier, French education system served cultural control. By 1946:

- ~45-50% of Martinicans literate in French
- French was language of advancement
- Creole was stigmatized
- Martinican children learned "our ancestors the Gauls" (French history presented as their history)

This created:

- **Assimilated elite:** Educated Martinicans identified as French, valued French culture, saw Creole culture as inferior
- **Excluded masses:** Creole-speaking workers couldn't access education, excluded from professions
- **Cultural alienation:** Martinicans learned to devalue their own culture

Newspapers and Information Control

Békés and French colonial administration controlled information through newspapers:

Le Courrier de la Martinique (békés-owned): Published news favorable to békés, opposed labor organizing, promoted békés interests.

La Paix (Catholic newspaper): Published religious content, conservative politics, supported békés and colonial order.

La Justice (moderate opposition newspaper): Founded by mulatto professionals, advocated reforms but within French system.

French censorship: Colonial administration censored newspapers critical of France or békés. Vichy period (1940-1943) imposed total censorship.

Information control meant:

- Workers had limited access to alternative perspectives
- Labor organizing faced information disadvantage
- Békés shaped public discourse

Cultural Production: The Emergence of Négritude

Despite assimilation pressure, Martinican intellectuals began resisting cultural alienation in 1930s.

Aimé Césaire (1913-2008):

Césaire was born in Basse-Pointe, Martinique, to working-class family. Brilliant student, he won scholarship to Lycée Schoelcher (elite secondary school in Fort-de-France), then Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris, then École Normale Supérieure (France's most prestigious university).

In Paris (1931-1939), Césaire encountered African and Caribbean intellectuals:

- Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegalese poet, future president of Senegal)
- Léon-Gontran Damas (French Guianese poet)

Together they developed **Négritude** movement:

Core ideas:

- Rejection of cultural assimilation: French culture wasn't superior to African/Caribbean culture
- Celebration of African heritage: Africa was source of pride, not shame
- Black consciousness: Colonized people should embrace Black identity rather than try to become "white" through assimilation
- Anti-colonialism: French colonialism was exploitation, not civilization

Césaire's "Notebook of a Return to the Native Land" (1939):

Césaire's epic poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (written 1936-1939, published 1939) was foundational Négritude text. It described:

- Martinique's poverty and exploitation
- Cultural alienation of colonized people
- Rejection of European superiority
- Celebration of Black identity
- Call for liberation

Key lines (translated): "my negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day my negritude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth's dead eye my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral it takes root in the red flesh of the soil it takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky"

This was revolutionary: embracing "negritude" (Blackness) as positive identity rather than accepting French definition of Blackness as inferiority.

Impact:

Négritude influenced intellectuals across French colonies. It created philosophical basis for:

- Cultural resistance to assimilation
- Anti-colonial politics
- Black pride movements

But Négritude's political implications were ambiguous. Césaire wanted cultural autonomy but wasn't sure about political independence. This ambiguity shaped his 1946 decision to support departmentalization.

VII. The Path to Departmentalization (1945-1946)

Post-War Political Opening

After Liberation (1943), political organizing exploded:

Communist Party: Became largest political force among workers. PCF organized:

- Labor unions
- Political rallies
- Literacy campaigns
- Anti-békés protests

Communists advocated:

- Land redistribution
- Worker control of plantations
- Independence from France (though this was debated)

Socialist Party: Moderate left, advocated:

- Reforms within French system
- Greater autonomy
- Social welfare
- Education expansion

Conservative békés parties: Advocated:

- Maintaining colonial order
- Protecting property rights
- Gradual reform only

Césaire's Political Choice (1945-1946)

Aimé Césaire returned to Martinique in 1939 (before war), became teacher at Lycée Schoelcher. During war he published literary journal *Tropiques* promoting Négritude ideas.

In 1945, Césaire joined Communist Party (PCF) and ran for mayor of Fort-de-France. **He won in landslide.** At age 32, he became mayor—position he held until 2001 (56 years!).

Césaire also ran for French National Assembly (1945) and won. He became Deputy representing Martinique in Paris.

The departmentalization debate (1945-1946):

Question: What should Martinique's political status be?

Options:

1. **Independence:** Become sovereign nation
2. **Autonomy:** Greater self-government within French system
3. **Departmentalization:** Full integration as French département (equivalent to any French region)
4. **Status quo:** Remain colony

Césaire's position: Supported departmentalization.

His reasoning:

- French citizenship would grant full rights (voting, welfare, education)
- Integration would bring French investment, infrastructure, healthcare
- Independence would leave Martinique impoverished, isolated (like Haiti)
- Békés would dominate independent Martinique—better to have French law protecting workers' rights
- Cultural autonomy could coexist with political integration

The debate was intense:

Pro-departmentalization (Césaire, socialists, many communists):

- Access to French welfare state
- Protection from békés exploitation
- Economic development through French investment
- Political equality as French citizens

Pro-independence (some communists, radicals):

- True decolonization requires independence
- Departmentalization is continued colonialism under different name
- Martinique should control own economy, resources, political destiny
- Examples: Cuba, Haiti showed independence was possible

Anti-departmentalization (békés, conservatives):

- Feared French social welfare laws would undermine békés control
- Feared land reform
- Preferred colonial status preserving békés autonomy

March 19, 1946: Departmentalization Law

French National Assembly voted to make Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, and Réunion into French départements. Césaire voted for the law.

Article 1: "The colonies of Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion, and French Guiana are erected into French départements."

Article 2: "The laws and decrees currently in force in metropolitan France...will be applicable to these new départements."

This meant:

- Martinique became legally part of France (like Normandy or Provence)
- French law applied (labor laws, welfare, citizenship rights)
- Martinicans were full French citizens
- French government administered Martinique through prefect (like any French région)

Why békés opposed it initially:

Békés feared French labor laws would:

- Force wage increases
- Mandate worker protections
- Enable land reform
- Undermine békés power

But békés adapted (as always). They lobbied French government to:

- Delay implementation of some labor laws
- Exclude agriculture from certain regulations
- Protect property rights
- Maintain békés economic power despite legal equality

By 1950s, békés realized departmentalization wasn't threat—it stabilized system by providing French subsidies, preventing revolution, and maintaining békés property while giving workers welfare benefits.

Part 3 Conclusion: Integration Without Transformation

The period 1860-1946 demonstrated békés elite's continued adaptation:

1. **Indentured labor (1853-1884)** replaced slavery while maintaining coerced labor
2. **Education expansion** created assimilated elite while excluding Creole-speaking masses
3. **Infrastructure investment** served export economy and békés interests

4. **Political representation** created democratic appearance while békés maintained economic power
5. **Sugar to banana transition** changed crop but not extraction pattern
6. **World Wars** disrupted economy but békés survived and consolidated
7. **Négritude movement** created cultural resistance but didn't break economic structures
8. **Departmentalization (1946)** integrated Martinique into France politically but békés maintained land ownership

By 1946, békés controlled:

- 70-75% of arable land
- Import/export companies
- Major commercial properties
- Rum distilleries
- Retail distribution

The same families—Hayot, Pécoul, de Lucy, Aubéry, Assier—controlled economy in 1946 as their ancestors did in 1700s: 310 years of continuous elite control.

Departmentalization changed legal status fundamentally—Martinique was now part of France, not a colony. But it didn't change who owned land or controlled economy.

Part 4 will examine 1946-2025: Did departmentalization finally break extraction pattern through French welfare state and legal equality? Or did it create new form of extraction through dependency, with békés adapting once again while French transfers masked continued economic subordination?

The evidence from 1635-1946 suggests adaptation, not rupture. Part 4 will test whether this pattern continues into the present.

[End of Part 3 - Part 4 will cover 1946-2025: Departmentalization and contemporary dependency]

Martinique: Extraction Through Continuity (1635-2025)

Part 4 of 4: Departmentalization and the Question of Dependency (1946-2025)

French Creole Societies Project

Introduction to Part 4: Welfare Colonialism or Genuine Integration?

Parts 1-3 examined how France engineered Martinique's plantation society (1635-1802), how békés adapted extraction mechanisms through abolition (1802-1860), and how late colonial consolidation led to departmentalization (1860-1946). This final part covers 1946-2025: the implementation of département status, French welfare state benefits, békés continued economic dominance, contemporary scandals and protests, and current conditions.

The central question: **Did departmentalization finally break the extraction pattern established in 1635, or did it create the most efficient form of extraction yet—providing welfare benefits that prevent resistance while maintaining békés economic control and French economic dependency?**

The evidence reveals profound ambiguity. Martinique in 2025 has:

- GDP per capita ~$28,000 (16x higher than independent Caribbean nations)
- Life expectancy 82 years
- Universal healthcare
- Modern infrastructure
- Literacy exceeding 90%

But also:

- Unemployment ~20% (youth unemployment ~40%)
- No economic sovereignty (uses euro, no independent monetary policy)
- Békés (~1% of population) control 50-70% of economy
- €2+ billion annual French transfers (30-40% of GDP)
- Perpetual trade deficit (imports 80-90% of goods, mostly from France)
- Economic structure designed around dependency, not production

This part argues: Departmentalization transformed extraction's legal form while preserving fundamental patterns. Békés maintained land and economic control. France provides substantial transfers, but Martinique's economy is structured to funnel wealth back to France through imports and békés-controlled distribution networks. Material conditions improved dramatically (welfare state benefits are real), but economic autonomy was permanently traded away. Whether this represents transformation or adaptation depends on how one weighs prosperity against sovereignty, welfare against self-determination.

I. Implementing Departmentalization: Benefits and Constraints (1946-1970)

The Legal Transformation (1946-1950)

The March 19, 1946 law making Martinique a French département was short—two articles—but its implications were vast. Article 2 stated: "The laws and decrees currently in force in metropolitan France...will be applicable to these new départements." This meant French law would gradually replace colonial law across all domains.

Implementation occurred in stages:

1946-1948: Initial changes

- French citizenship confirmed for all Martinicans (already existed in theory since 1848, now unambiguous)
- French electoral law applied: Martinicans could vote in all French elections (presidential, National Assembly, Senate, European Parliament after 1979)
- French administrative structure: Prefect appointed from Paris administered Martinique (like any French région)
- Colonial Governor position abolished

1948-1950: Labor law extension

- French labor code applied to Martinique gradually
- 40-hour work week (established in France 1936, extended to Martinique 1950)
- Paid vacation (2 weeks annually, established France 1936, Martinique 1950)
- Minimum wage (*salaire minimum*) established
- Labor unions legal protection

Békés lobbied intensely to delay labor law implementation. They succeeded in excluding agriculture from some provisions until mid-1950s. But by 1960, French labor law generally applied.

1950s: Social welfare extension

- Family allowances (*allocations familiales*): Payments to families with children
- Old-age pensions: French retirement system extended to Martinique
- Unemployment benefits: Established by 1960s
- Healthcare: French social security (*sécurité sociale*) extended gradually

By 1960, Martinique was integrated into French welfare state. Martinicans had access to benefits that French citizens in metropolitan France received.

Economic Impact of French Welfare (1946-1970)

The extension of French welfare state to Martinique had immediate material impact on average Martinicans:

Income increases:

Minimum wage in Martinique (1950s-1970s):

- 1952: ~200 francs monthly (approximately 6-7 francs daily, compared to 2-4 francs daily in 1940s)
- 1960: ~350 francs monthly
- 1970: ~600 francs monthly
- Real wages (adjusted for inflation) increased approximately 150-200% between 1946-1970

For workers who previously earned 2-4 francs daily, minimum wage laws increased income substantially. Combined with family allowances, pensions, and unemployment benefits, average household income rose dramatically.

Healthcare access:

Before 1946: Limited healthcare for poor Martinicans. Hospital care cost money; many couldn't afford doctors. Infant mortality was high (~80-100 per 1,000 births in 1940s).

After 1946 welfare extension: French *sécurité sociale* covered hospital care, doctor visits, medicines. Infant mortality declined:

- 1950: ~65 per 1,000 births
- 1960: ~45 per 1,000
- 1970: ~25 per 1,000
- 1980: ~15 per 1,000
- 2000: ~7 per 1,000 (comparable to France)

Life expectancy increased:

- 1946: ~50-55 years
- 1960: ~62 years
- 1980: ~73 years
- 2000: ~78 years
- 2025: ~82 years (matches metropolitan France)

Education expansion:

French investment in education infrastructure accelerated:

- 1946: ~250 schools
- 1960: ~350 schools
- 1980: ~450 schools plus secondary schools (lycées) expansion

Literacy rates:

- 1946: ~50% literate in French
- 1960: ~70%
- 1980: ~85%
- 2000: ~90%+

University education became accessible—young Martinicans could attend French universities (tuition was minimal/free in France), enabling professional careers.

Housing and infrastructure:

French government funded:

- Public housing (*habitations à loyer modéré—HLM*): Multi-family buildings providing subsidized housing for working families
- Road improvements: Paved roads connecting all major towns by 1960s
- Electricity and water: Extended to rural areas through 1960s-1970s
- Telecommunications: Modern phone system by 1970s

By 1970, Martinique's infrastructure approached metropolitan French standards in urban areas (rural areas lagged but improved gradually).

The Cost: Economic Dependency Established (1946-1970)

These material benefits came with structural economic dependency:

Trade imbalance:

Martinique's trade pattern 1946-1970:

- **Exports:** Bananas and rum (declining sugar) to France

- **Imports:** Manufactured goods, food, fuel—80-90% from France

Trade deficit widened:

- 1950: Imports exceeded exports by ~30%
- 1960: Deficit ~50%
- 1970: Deficit ~60%
- Imports cost far more than export revenues

This deficit was financed by **French government transfers**—subsidies, welfare payments, infrastructure spending. Martinique consumed more than it produced; France covered the difference.

Why dependency developed:

1. Banana monoculture: Martinique's export economy remained focused on bananas. By 1960s, bananas accounted for 60-70% of export value. When banana prices fluctuated or production declined (hurricanes, disease), entire export economy suffered. Martinique produced little else that could compete internationally.

2. Manufacturing underdevelopment: Unlike Puerto Rico (which industrialized 1950s-1970s through "Operation Bootstrap"), Martinique didn't develop significant manufacturing. Why? French imports were cheaper due to no tariffs (internal French market). Local manufacturing couldn't compete with French factories' economies of scale. Békés preferred importing goods from France (which they distributed) to investing in local industry.

3. Service economy emergence: As French welfare increased purchasing power, service sector jobs expanded (retail, restaurants, tourism, government). But these jobs depended on French money flowing in—they weren't producing exportable wealth.

French transfer amounts:

Estimating precisely is difficult (French government doesn't publish detailed breakdowns), but approximate figures:

- 1960: French transfers to Martinique ~500-700 million francs annually
- 1970: ~1.5-2 billion francs
- As share of Martinique GDP: approximately 20-30% by 1970

Martinique's economy was becoming subsidized economy—producing less than it consumed, with France covering gap.

Békés Adaptation to Departmentalization (1946-1970)

Békés initially opposed departmentalization, fearing French labor laws and potential land reform. But they adapted successfully:

1. Maintained land ownership:

No land redistribution occurred post-1946. Békés owned ~70% of arable land in 1946; they owned ~65-70% in 1970 (slight decline as some sold urban land for development, but agricultural land remained concentrated).

The same families—Hayot, Pécoul, de Lucy, Assier de Pompignan, Aubéry—controlled major estates in 1970 as in 1946 and earlier.

2. Shifted to commerce and imports:

As banana production declined (disease, hurricanes, competition from larger producers like Ecuador), békés diversified into importing and distributing manufactured goods from France.

Hayot family example:

By 1960s, Hayot family owned:

- Remaining banana estates
- Largest import/distribution company in Martinique (imported French goods, distributed to retailers)
- Major retail stores in Fort-de-France
- Real estate holdings

They adapted from plantation agriculture to commerce, using capital accumulated from 300+ years of plantation ownership.

3. Collaborated with French administration:

Békés maintained close relationships with French prefects and administrators. They provided local knowledge, economic expertise, and political support. In return, French administration protected békés property rights and business interests.

4. Benefited from French market access:

As French département, Martinique had tariff-free access to French market (300+ million consumers by 1970s). Békés exported bananas and rum to France without tariffs, while importing French manufactured goods without tariffs. This integration benefited békés who controlled export/import trade.

Pattern: Békés lost direct coercive control over labor (slavery, then bound labor, then low-wage coercion). But they maintained economic power through property ownership, commercial control, and collaboration with French administration. French welfare provided benefits to workers while békés captured commercial profits.

II. Consolidation and Protests: The Césaire Era (1970-2001)

Aimé Césaire's Long Tenure

Aimé Césaire served as:

- Mayor of Fort-de-France: 1945-2001 (56 years—one of longest mayoral tenures in French history)
- Deputy in French National Assembly: 1945-1993 (48 years)

His tenure shaped Martinique profoundly:

Political positions:

Césaire left Communist Party (PCF) in 1956 after Soviet invasion of Hungary. He founded Parti Progressiste Martiniquais (PPM—Martinican Progressive Party), advocating:

- Autonomy within French Republic (not independence, not status quo)
- Cultural identity preservation (Creole language, Caribbean culture)
- Economic development benefiting Martinicans (not just békés)
- Social justice and anti-racism

Césaire's paradox:

He was simultaneously:

- **Cultural nationalist:** Championed Négritude, Creole culture, Caribbean identity, anti-colonial thought
- **Political integrationist:** Supported departmentalization, wanted to remain French

This paradox reflected genuine dilemma: Independence might bring sovereignty but also poverty (Césaire feared "becoming another Haiti"). Integration brought material benefits but dependency and loss of self-determination.

Césaire questioned his own choice:

By 1980s-1990s, Césaire expressed doubts about 1946 departmentalization. In interviews, he acknowledged:

- Economic dependency was problematic
- Békés had adapted and maintained power
- Cultural assimilation pressures were strong
- Martinique lacked economic autonomy

But he never advocated independence, instead supporting autonomy—greater self-government while maintaining French citizenship and welfare benefits.

Césaire's legacy:

He transformed Fort-de-France:

- Built public housing for working families
- Expanded schools and libraries
- Promoted Creole language and culture (though French remained dominant)
- Created cultural festivals celebrating Caribbean identity

But he couldn't transform economic structures. Békés maintained control; French transfers increased; dependency deepened.

Independence Movements and Suppression (1960s-1980s)

Despite Césaire's dominance, independence movements emerged:

OJAM (Organisation de la Jeunesse Anticolonialiste de la Martinique):

Founded 1962 by young radicals advocating immediate independence. OJAM organized:

- Protests against French military presence
- Strikes against békés businesses
- Bombings of symbolic targets (békés properties, government buildings—no casualties intended)

French response:

French police (CRS—riot police) and intelligence services (DST) infiltrated OJAM, arrested leaders, and suppressed movement by late 1960s. Several OJAM leaders were:

- Arrested and imprisoned in France
- Banned from returning to Martinique
- Under surveillance

1970s-1980s independence groups:

Smaller groups continued advocating independence:

- GRS (Groupe Révolution Socialiste)
- MIM (Mouvement Indépendantiste Martiniquais)

But these groups remained marginal. Most Martinicans preferred département status, fearing independence would bring poverty.

December 1959 events (before OJAM):

Riots in Fort-de-France in December 1959 over békés refusing to honor a contract with small merchants. French CRS police killed 3 Martinicans during suppression. This radicalized some youth, contributing to OJAM formation.

Pattern: French state suppressed independence movements through police violence, arrests, surveillance. Combined with welfare benefits that raised living standards, French state co-opted potential resistance—most people preferred prosperity with dependency to independence with poverty.

Economic Stagnation Despite Transfers (1970-2000)

Despite massive French transfers, Martinique's economy stagnated in concerning ways:

Unemployment rose:

- 1960: ~10-12% unemployment
- 1970: ~15%
- 1980: ~20%
- 1990: ~23%
- 2000: ~25%

Why rising unemployment despite French investment?

1. Banana industry decline:

Banana production peaked 1960s (~60,000 tons), then declined:

- 1970: ~55,000 tons
- 1980: ~45,000 tons
- 1990: ~35,000 tons
- 2000: ~30,000 tons

Causes: hurricanes (1979, 1989, 1995), disease (particularly Sigatoka), competition from cheaper producers (Ecuador, Central America). Banana industry shed jobs—thousands of plantation workers unemployed.

2. Manufacturing never developed:

As noted, Martinique didn't industrialize. Service jobs (tourism, retail, government) grew, but these depended on French money, not productive exports.

3. Youth emigration:

Educated young Martinicans increasingly moved to metropolitan France for better job opportunities:

- 1960s-1970s: ~2,000-3,000 annually
- 1980s-1990s: ~3,000-5,000 annually

This "brain drain" removed most educated workers, leaving aging population and less-skilled workers.

4. Békés business dominance:

Békés families controlled import/distribution businesses that employed many Martinicans but at low wages. Profits went to békés owners; workers received minimal wages.

French welfare prevented crisis:

Unemployment would have caused massive poverty, but French welfare cushioned impact:

- Unemployment benefits (typically 60-70% of previous wage for 2+ years)
- Housing subsidies
- Family allowances
- Retirement pensions starting age 60

Workers could survive unemployment through welfare. This prevented desperation that might fuel revolution, but created dependency—people relied on French transfers, not local productive economy.

Trade deficit widened:

- 1980: Imports exceeded exports by ~70%
- 1990: ~80%
- 2000: ~85%

Martinique consumed far more than produced. French transfers financed this consumption, but economic structure was unsustainable without French support.

III. Contemporary Period: Scandals, Strikes, and the Dependency Question (2000-2025)

The Chlordecone Scandal: Environmental Racism as Contemporary Extraction

The Chlordecone scandal exemplifies how extraction adapted to contemporary forms—békés and French state poisoning Martinican population for profit.

Background:

Chlordecone is organochlorine pesticide (chemically similar to DDT). It was used on banana plantations in Martinique and Guadeloupe 1972-1993 to combat banana weevil.

The timeline:

- **1968**: Chlordecone identified as highly toxic, carcinogenic, and persistent in environment (half-life in soil: 50+ years)
- **1976**: US banned Chlordecone after health crisis in Virginia (factory workers exposed developed neurological disorders)
- **1979**: France banned Chlordecone in metropolitan France
- **1981**: France extended ban to Martinique and Guadeloupe
- **1990**: France again banned Chlordecone in DOM (ban had been ignored)
- **1993**: Final ban enforced (somewhat)

But békés plantations continued using Chlordecone throughout:

Despite bans, French authorities granted exemptions ("temporary authorizations") allowing continued use in Martinique 1981-1993. Why? Békés banana planters lobbied French government, arguing:

- Banana production would collapse without pesticide
- No alternative was effective
- Economic impact would harm Martinique

French government prioritized békés profits over public health.

The poisoning:

Chlordecone contaminated:

- Soil (70-90% of agricultural land in Martinique)
- Rivers and coastal waters
- Fish and seafood
- Livestock (through contaminated feed)
- Drinking water (in some areas)

By 2000s, approximately 90% of Martinique's population had detectable Chlordecone in their blood.

Health impacts:

Studies from 2000s-2020s showed:

- **Prostate cancer**: Martinique has world's highest prostate cancer rate—twice the rate in metropolitan France. Research linked Chlordecone exposure to elevated prostate cancer risk.
- **Pregnancy complications**: Chlordecone exposure linked to premature births, low birth weight.
- **Neurological impacts**: Potential cognitive impairments in children exposed in utero.
- **Other cancers**: Possible links to liver and breast cancer (research ongoing).

Who was responsible?

1. **Békés planters:** Used Chlordecone knowing it was toxic, prioritizing profits over workers' and consumers' health.
2. **French government:** Granted exemptions despite knowing Chlordecone was banned in France for health reasons. Valued békés economic interests over Martinican health.
3. **Pesticide manufacturers:** Sold Chlordecone to Martinique after it was banned elsewhere.

The aftermath:

2006-present: Lawsuits filed against French state and pesticide companies. Demands for:

- Health compensation for victims
- Environmental cleanup (technically impossible—Chlordecone persists for centuries)
- Criminal prosecution of responsible parties

2018: French parliament acknowledged Chlordecone contamination was "environmental and health scandal."

2021: Criminal investigation opened, but prosecution is limited—many responsible officials are dead or protected by statute of limitations.

2023: Compensation programs established for health impacts, but inadequate.

Analytical significance:

Chlordecone scandal demonstrates continued extraction pattern:

- Békés prioritized profits over people's health (as they had for 350+ years)
- French state protected békés interests over Martinican welfare
- Martinican population was poisoned for economic benefit of elite
- Contamination persists for generations (estimated 500+ years before Chlordecone fully breaks down)

This is extractive violence in contemporary form—not whipping enslaved people, but poisoning entire population for banana profits. The mechanism changed; the pattern persisted.

The 2009 General Strike: "Pwofitasyon" and Economic Justice

In February-March 2009, Martinique (and Guadeloupe simultaneously) experienced massive general strike that shut down economy for 5 weeks.

Trigger:

High cost of living in Martinique compared to incomes. Price comparisons (2009):

- Gasoline: 30-40% more expensive than metropolitan France
- Food: 20-50% more expensive
- Consumer goods: 20-40% more expensive

But wages were only ~10-15% higher than metropolitan France minimum wage, while unemployment was 20%+. People couldn't afford basic goods.

"Pwofitasyon" (profiteering):

Protesters used Creole term *pwofitasyon* (profiteering) to describe békés businesses:

- Import companies charged high prices for goods from France
- Distribution monopolies prevented competition
- Békés owners captured excessive profits while workers struggled

LKP (Liyannaj Kont Pwofitasyon—Collective Against Profiteering):

Led by Élie Domota (union organizer), LKP united:

- Labor unions
- Student organizations
- Community groups
- Small business owners

Strike demands:

1. €200 monthly wage increase for all workers
2. Price controls on essential goods
3. Investigation of békés price-setting practices
4. Greater economic autonomy for Martinique

Duration and impact:

- **38 days in Martinique** (44 days in Guadeloupe)
- Economy shut down completely: ports closed, businesses shuttered, roads blocked
- Tourism collapsed (cruise ships canceled stops)
- Essential services only (hospitals, emergency)

French government response:

President Nicolas Sarkozy sent ministers to negotiate. French government eventually conceded:

- €50-€100 wage increases (less than demanded)
- Some price controls
- Promises to investigate monopolistic practices

Strike ended March 14, 2009 after agreements reached.

Aftermath:

Minimal structural change: Békés maintained control of import/distribution. Prices remained high. Unemployment remained 20%+. The strike won temporary concessions but didn't transform economic structures.

Significance: The strike demonstrated:

1. Widespread anger at békés economic dominance and profiteering
2. Martinicans' awareness that their prosperity was lower than it should be given French transfers
3. Békés captured much of French money flowing into Martinique through monopolistic business practices
4. French government protected békés interests while offering minimal concessions to workers

Pattern: Like chlordecone, the 2009 strike revealed continued extraction—békés capturing wealth while masses faced high unemployment and prices. Resistance emerged, but békés adapted, maintained control.

Current Economic Structure (2020-2025)

GDP and income:

- GDP (2023): ~€10 billion ($10.8 billion)
- GDP per capita: ~$28,000-30,000
- Population: ~360,000
- Median household income: ~€25,000-28,000 annually

For comparison:

- Metropolitan France GDP per capita: ~$43,000
- Independent Caribbean nations (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad): $5,000-$17,000
- Martinique is 2-5x wealthier than independent Caribbean, but 30-35% below metropolitan France

Unemployment (2024):

- Overall: ~17-20%
- Youth (15-24): ~35-40%
- Long-term unemployment (>1 year): ~50% of unemployed

High unemployment persists despite French welfare.

Economic sectors:

Public sector (30-35% of employment):

- Government administration
- Education
- Healthcare
- Public services

French government directly employs ~30,000-35,000 Martinicans.

Private services (40-45% of employment):

- Tourism: Hotels, restaurants, cruise ship services (~15,000-20,000 jobs)
- Retail: Stores, supermarkets (~20,000-25,000 jobs)
- Professional services: Banking, insurance, real estate

Agriculture (5-7% of employment):

- Bananas: ~20,000 tons production (declined from 60,000 in 1960s)
- Sugar: Virtually eliminated (one small factory remains)
- Market gardens: Vegetables, tropical fruits for local consumption
- Rum distilleries: ~10 distilleries producing AOC Martinique rum

Manufacturing (5% of employment):

- Minimal: rum production, small food processing, construction materials
- No significant export-oriented manufacturing

Trade:

Exports (2023): ~€400-500 million

- Rum: ~40% of exports
- Bananas: ~30%
- Other (refined petroleum products, small manufactures): ~30%

Imports (2023): ~€3-3.5 billion

- Food: ~30%
- Manufactured goods: ~40%
- Petroleum/fuel: ~15%
- Other: ~15%

Trade deficit: ~€2.5-3 billion annually (~25-30% of GDP)

This deficit is financed by French transfers.

French transfers (2023-2024):

Estimated ~€2-2.5 billion annually, including:

- Social security/welfare: ~€1-1.2 billion (pensions, unemployment, healthcare, family allowances)
- Public sector salaries: ~€700-900 million
- Infrastructure investment: ~€200-300 million
- Other transfers: ~€100-200 million

French transfers account for **~20-25% of GDP** directly, more if indirect effects included.

Békés economic control (2025):

Békés families (~3,000-5,000 people, ~1% of population) control estimated **50-70% of Martinique's private economy**:

GBH (Groupe Bernard Hayot): Martinique's largest private business group

- Owned by Hayot family (same family from 1600s)
- Revenue: ~€2+ billion annually across Caribbean (Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana)
- Operations:
    - Supermarket chains (Carrefour franchises)
    - Auto dealerships (multiple brands)
    - Import/distribution (French consumer goods)
    - Real estate
    - Hotels
- Employs: ~8,000-10,000 people across Caribbean
- Market dominance: Controls ~30-40% of retail distribution in Martinique

Other békés families:

Approximately 20-30 békés families control:

- Remaining banana plantations
- Rum distilleries (some)

- Import/distribution companies
- Commercial real estate
- Construction companies
- Media (newspapers, radio)

Pattern: The same families that owned plantations in 1700s control Martinique's economy in 2025. They adapted from agriculture to commerce, but dominance persists across **390 years**.

What Life is Like for Average Martinican (2025)

Material conditions:

Housing: Most Martinicans live in modern housing—apartments or small houses with electricity, running water, internet. Quality varies:

- Middle class: Comfortable homes, often mortgaged
- Working class: Modest apartments or houses, many in subsidized housing (HLM)
- Poor: Crowded apartments, some informal settlements on margins

Healthcare: Universal coverage through French sécurité sociale. Access to:

- Modern hospitals in Fort-de-France and major towns
- Primary care physicians
- Specialists
- Pharmaceuticals (mostly covered by insurance)

Healthcare quality approaches metropolitan France standards, though rural areas have less access.

Education: Free public schools (primary through university). Education quality:

- Literacy: 90%+
- Secondary school completion: ~80%
- University attendance: ~40% of youth attend post-secondary (often in France)

But schools continue French curriculum (not Martinique-focused), French language dominates (Creole is marginalized).

Transportation: Most families own cars (necessary due to limited public transit). Roads are paved and well-maintained. No rail system; limited buses.

Consumer goods: Access to modern consumer goods (electronics, appliances, clothing) but prices are high (20-40% above metropolitan France).

Culture: Vibrant Creole culture persists:

- Creole language spoken at home and informally (though French dominates formal settings)
- Caribbean music (zouk, compas, reggae)
- Carnival (major annual celebration)
- Creole cuisine
- Strong sense of Caribbean identity

But French culture dominates education, media, and high culture.

Social challenges:

1. **High unemployment:** Especially youth. Many young people leave for France.
2. **High cost of living:** Prices far above incomes for many.
3. **Békés economic dominance:** Resentment that békés families control so much wealth.
4. **Drug violence:** Growing cocaine trafficking from South America through Caribbean. Gang violence in Fort-de-France increasing.
5. **Brain drain:** Best educated leave for France; Martinique loses human capital.
6. **Cultural alienation:** Tension between French/Creole identity. Creole language stigmatized in formal settings.

Comparison to metropolitan France:

Martinicans have **lower** income, **higher** unemployment, **higher** prices, and **less** economic opportunity than metropolitan France. But they have **vastly higher** income, **better** healthcare, and **better** infrastructure than independent Caribbean nations.

The question: Is this acceptable tradeoff?

IV. Resistance Suppression: From Violence to Welfare (1635-2025)

Colonial Violence (1635-1848)

As detailed in Parts 1 and 2, colonial authorities suppressed resistance through:

- Public executions of escaped enslaved people and rebels
- Torture to extract confessions
- Mutilation (ears cut off, hamstringing) as punishment and deterrent
- Hunting expeditions (*chasses aux nègres*) to capture maroons
- Code Noir legal framework enabling this violence

Békés and French colonial state used extreme violence to maintain slavery for 213 years (1635-1848).

Post-Abolition Control (1848-1946)

After abolition, coercion became economic rather than physical:

- Vagrancy laws criminalizing not working
- Land monopoly forcing workers to accept békés wages
- Police breaking strikes (1925, 1935)
- Békés controlling economic opportunities

Violence was less visible but control persisted.

Suppressing Independence Movements (1960s-1980s)

French state suppressed independence movements through:

Police violence:

- December 1959: 3 killed in Fort-de-France riots
- 1960s-1970s: CRS (riot police) beat protesters, arrested activists
- Tear gas, batons, arrests became routine response to protests

Surveillance and infiltration:

- DST (intelligence service) infiltrated OJAM and other independence groups
- Informants reported on activists
- Phone tapping, mail monitoring

Arrests and imprisonment:

- Independence leaders arrested, tried in France (not Martinique)
- Sentenced to years in prison
- Some banned from returning to Martinique

Legal repression:

- Anti-terrorism laws used to prosecute independence activists (bombings of békés properties, though no casualties)
- Long prison sentences deterred others

Media control:

- Békés-owned newspapers portrayed independence activists as dangerous extremists
- French media ignored independence movements or presented negatively

Contemporary Resistance Suppression Through Welfare (1980-2025)

By 1980s-2000s, French state rarely needed violence to suppress resistance. Instead:

Economic co-optation:

- French welfare benefits (unemployment, healthcare, pensions) ensured minimum living standard
- People dependent on French transfers feared losing them if Martinique became independent
- "Better to have unemployment benefits than be poor like independent Caribbean"—this logic suppressed independence support

Material prosperity as control:

- Martinicans' living standards far exceeded independent Caribbean
- Fear of poverty prevented revolutionary consciousness
- Most preferred material security to political sovereignty

Limited political change allowed:

- Martinicans could vote, elect representatives, protest (within limits)
- This released pressure that might otherwise fuel revolution
- Democratic participation channeled dissent into manageable forms

Cultural autonomy granted:

- Creole language and culture tolerated (though not officially supported)
- Carnival, music, cultural festivals allowed
- This provided sense of identity while preventing political mobilization

Pattern: French state learned that welfare and cultural autonomy suppress resistance more effectively than violence. Why risk revolution when people have healthcare, pensions, and can celebrate culture? Material benefits co-opted potential resistance.

2009 strike as exception:

The 2009 strike showed limits of this strategy. When békés profiteering became too extreme and cost of living too high, people mobilized despite welfare. But French government offered concessions (wage increases, promises of reform) that ended strike before it became revolutionary.

Why No Independence Movement Success?

Martinique has never had successful independence movement (unlike most colonies). Why?

1. French welfare benefits: Material prosperity suppressed revolutionary motivation. Most Martinicans preferred prosperity with dependency to independence with poverty.

2. Fear of "becoming another Haiti": Césaire and others feared independence would lead to chaos and poverty. This fear, rooted in awareness of Haiti's trajectory, prevented independence support.

3. Békés would dominate independent Martinique: Without French law protecting workers, békés would exploit even more freely. Better to have French law constraining békés.

4. Small size: Martinique's 1,128 km² and 360,000 people—could it be economically viable alone? Doubts about viability prevented independence support.

5. French repression: In 1960s-1970s when independence movements emerged, French state crushed them. By time repression eased (1980s), welfare had co-opted potential resistance.

6. Cultural integration: 390 years of French rule, 200+ years of education in French, economic integration—Martinique is deeply integrated with France. Separation seems unimaginable to many.

V. Elite Network Coordination: Békés Continuity and Adaptation (1635-2025)

390 Years of Békés Dominance

The most striking feature of Martinique's history is **békés continuity**: The same white Creole families that established plantations in 1600s-1700s control major sectors of economy in 2025.

Key families across centuries:

Hayot family:

- Established in Martinique: 1690s
- 1700s: Sugar plantations
- 1800s: Sugar/coffee estates, survived abolition
- 1900s: Banana plantations, began import businesses
- 2000s: GBH group (Groupe Bernard Hayot)—Martinique's largest private business, controlling supermarkets, auto dealerships, imports, hotels
- **2025: Bernard Hayot is billionaire, controls ~30-40% of Martinique's retail economy**

Pécoul family:

- Established: early 1700s
- Owned sugar estates through 1800s
- Transitioned to commerce 1900s
- 2025: Still own businesses in Martinique

De Lucy de Fossarieu family:

- Established: 1700s
- Owned plantations through 1800s
- Maintained land holdings through 1900s
- 2025: Large landowners

Aubéry, Assier de Pompignan, Clerc families:

- All established 1600s-1700s
- All maintained land/business ownership through every transition
- All still present in Martinique's economic elite 2025

This is 325-390 years of continuous dominance by same families. They survived:

- Three abolition cycles (1794, 1802, 1848)
- Sugar crisis
- Mount Pelée eruption
- World Wars
- Departmentalization
- Every political and economic transformation

How did they maintain power?

Mechanisms of Elite Continuity

1. Land ownership:

Békés' fundamental power source was land. They owned it in 1635; they own it in 2025. Every transformation (abolition, departmentalization) preserved property rights. French state never confiscated békés land or redistributed it to formerly enslaved people.

Even as agriculture declined, land remained valuable:

- Real estate development (urban land)
- Tourism development (coastal land)
- Rent extraction from small farmers

2. Adaptation to economic changes:

Békés adapted repeatedly:

- 1650s-1848: Slavery-based plantation agriculture
- 1848-1900: Wage labor plantation agriculture
- 1900-1960s: Banana cultivation with indentured/wage labor
- 1960s-2025: Import/distribution businesses, tourism, real estate

Each time, they used accumulated capital to enter new profitable sectors.

3. Endogamy:

Békés families intermarry—maintaining tight-knit group:

- Békés typically marry other békés (not mulatto or Black Martinicans)
- This preserves capital within group
- Children inherit businesses from both sides
- Network effects multiply

A 2009 documentary *Les Derniers Maîtres de la Martinique* (The Last Masters of Martinique) estimated ~90% of békés marriages are endogamous.

4. Education:

Békés send children to French elite schools (lycées, universities). This provides:

- French language fluency (native)
- Elite credentials (diplomas from Sciences Po, HEC, etc.)
- Social networks with French business/political elite
- Management skills to run complex businesses

5. Collaboration with French administration:

Békés maintain close relationships with French prefects, ministers, administrators. They provide:

- Local knowledge and expertise
- Economic influence
- Political support

In return, French administration protects:

- Békés property rights
- Békés business interests
- Import monopolies and distribution networks

This collaboration persists across left/right French governments—békés adapt to whoever governs.

6. Control of information:

Békés families own or influence:

- Newspapers (France-Antilles, major daily)
- Radio stations
- Some television
- Advertising

This shapes public discourse, portrays békés favorably, and marginalizes criticism.

7. Legal structures protecting wealth:

French inheritance law enables:

- Family trusts and holdings to preserve capital across generations
- Corporate structures that shield personal wealth
- Tax advantages for businesses

Békés use sophisticated legal arrangements to preserve and grow wealth.

Why Békés Dominance Persists Despite Legal Equality

French law since 1848 (and especially 1946) proclaims equality. But békés maintain dominance through:

Economic power trumps legal equality: Békés control capital, land, businesses. Workers have legal rights but economic dependence. Békés set wages, hire/fire, control opportunities. Legal equality doesn't erase economic power imbalance.

Property rights protected: French law protects private property sacrosanct. Békés' land ownership—established through slavery and colonial violence—is legally protected. No redistribution can occur without violating property rights.

Capital accumulation compounds: Békés accumulated capital over 390 years. This capital generates more capital (investment returns, business profits). Workers start with nothing (no land, no capital from ancestors) and struggle to accumulate. Initial inequality persists across generations.

Networks and social capital: Békés know other békés, know French elite, have access to capital, know how to navigate systems. Workers lack these networks. Social capital reinforces economic capital.

Racism and colorism: Despite legal equality, darker skin correlates with disadvantage. Békés (white) have advantages in business, social perception, access to opportunities. This is subtle but persistent.

The Békés Question in Contemporary Martinique

Békés dominance creates tension:

Resentment: Many Martinicans resent that békés—descendants of slaveholders—still control economy. The 2009 strike explicitly targeted békés profiteering.

Debate over legitimacy: Are békés' wealth and power legitimate (earned through business success) or illegitimate (founded on slavery, maintained through colonial structures)? This debate is contentious.

Calls for reform: Some advocate:

- Breaking békés monopolies
- Land reform
- Wealth redistribution
- Reparations for slavery (paid by békés descendants)

Békés response: Békés argue:

- Their businesses create jobs
- Their wealth benefits Martinique (investment, employment)
- They operate legally
- Past injustices (slavery) shouldn't affect current property rights
- They're Martinican too, born and raised on island

Pattern: Békés maintain 390-year dominance through property ownership, capital accumulation, adaptation, endogamy, and collaboration with French administration. Legal equality exists, but economic inequality persists because fundamental structures (property rights, capital accumulation) weren't transformed.

VI. Conclusion: Extraction Through Dependency—A 390-Year Pattern Adapted

Synthesis: What Changed and What Persisted (1635-2025)

Across 390 years, Martinique underwent massive transformations:

Legal transformations:

- 1635-1848: Slavery (Code Noir)
- 1848: Abolition, immediate emancipation
- 1946: Departmentalization, full French citizenship
- Legal status changed fundamentally three times

Political transformations:

- 1635-1848: Colonial subject (enslaved or free but subordinate)
- 1848-1946: Colonial citizens with limited rights
- 1946-2025: Full French citizens, voting rights, representation

Economic transformations:

- 1635-1660: Tobacco
- 1660-1900: Sugar
- 1900-1970: Bananas
- 1970-2025: Services, tourism, French transfers
- Production systems changed completely

Social transformations:

- Population increased from 0 (indigenous eliminated) to 360,000
- Racial composition: enslaved African majority → free Black/mulatto/white mix → ethnically diverse (Indian, Tamil, Chinese minorities)
- Life expectancy increased from ~30-40 years (enslaved people) to 82 years
- Literacy increased from ~5% (1848) to 90%+ (2025)
- Material living standards increased dramatically

But fundamental patterns persisted:

The Continuity: Békés Elite and Extraction Mechanisms

1. Land ownership concentration (1635-2025):

Békés families have controlled 60-75% of arable land continuously:

- 1700: Békés owned ~85% of land
- 1848: Békés owned ~80% (abolition didn't redistribute land)
- 1946: Békés owned ~70%
- 2025: Békés own ~60-70% of arable land, control 50-70% of private economy

The same families: Hayot, Pécoul, de Lucy, Aubéry, Assier de Pompignan—established 1600s-1700s, still dominant 2025.

2. Wealth extraction (1635-2025):

Mechanisms changed, pattern persisted:

1635-1848: Direct extraction through slavery

- Békés owned enslaved people and land

- Enslaved labor produced sugar/coffee
- Békés captured all wealth
- French merchants captured trade profits

1848-1946: Extraction through wage labor and land monopoly

- Békés owned land
- Workers needed wages, had to work for békés
- Békés suppressed wages through land monopoly
- Békés captured agricultural profits

1946-2025: Extraction through commercial control and dependency

- Békés control import/distribution businesses
- French transfers flow into Martinique (~€2+ billion annually)
- Martinicans spend money on imported goods (80-90% from France)
- Békés-controlled businesses capture profits from distributing imports
- Money flows: France → Martinican consumers → békés businesses → back to France (imports) and békés wealth

Pattern: Békés always controlled the mechanism by which wealth could be captured. Under slavery: owned people and land. After abolition: owned land, forcing wage labor. After departmentalization: owned distribution networks capturing profits from French transfers.

3. Labor coercion (1635-2025):

Mechanisms changed, compulsion persisted:

1635-1848: Direct violence (whipping, torture, execution) compelled labor

1848-1946: Economic violence (starvation wages, vagrancy laws, land monopoly) compelled labor

1946-2025: Structural unemployment and békés control compel labor

- 20% unemployment means workers compete desperately for jobs
- Békés businesses can pay low wages because workers have no alternatives
- French welfare prevents starvation, enabling békés to pay minimal wages (French welfare subsidizes békés' low-wage business model)

4. French economic control (1635-2025):

France has extracted wealth from Martinique continuously:

1635-1946: Colonial extraction

- Martinique exported sugar/coffee/bananas to France

- France captured trade profits through shipping, refining, distribution
- French merchants provided credit, captured interest
- Metropolitan France benefited from Martinique's production

1946-2025: Extraction through dependency

- Martinique imports 80-90% of goods from France
- Martinican consumers buy French products
- French companies capture profits
- French transfers (~€2 billion) flow back to France through imports (~€3 billion trade)

Pattern: France always captured more wealth than it invested. Colonial period: direct extraction. Contemporary period: extraction through trade imbalance.

The Analytical Verdict: Welfare or Extraction?

The central question: Did departmentalization break extraction pattern or adapt it?

Case for transformation:

1. Material conditions improved dramatically:

- GDP per capita increased from ~$1,000 (1946) to ~$28,000 (2025)
- Life expectancy increased from ~50-55 years to 82 years
- Infant mortality declined from ~80/1000 to ~7/1000
- Universal healthcare, free education, modern infrastructure
- Literacy from 50% to 90%+

These improvements are real and significant.

2. Legal equality achieved:

- French citizenship for all
- Voting rights
- Protection by French law
- Labor rights (40-hour week, minimum wage, unions)

Legal discrimination ended.

3. Political participation enabled:

- Martinicans elect representatives
- Can protest, organize, speak freely
- Césaire served as mayor 56 years, Deputy 48 years

Political voice granted.

4. French investment substantial:

- €2+ billion annually in transfers
- Infrastructure, healthcare, education far exceed what independent Caribbean nations have
- France provided more investment post-1946 than extracted (arguably)

5. Violence ended:

- No more whipping, torture, executions
- Police violence exists but is constrained by French law
- Material security reduces desperation that fuels violence

Conclusion (transformation argument): Departmentalization genuinely transformed Martinique from exploited colony to integrated French region benefiting from welfare state. Material prosperity is real. Extraction ended; development began.

Case for extraction continuity (adapted form):

1. Economic sovereignty lost permanently:

- Martinique uses euro (no monetary policy)
- Imports 80-90% of goods (no trade policy)
- Can't negotiate trade agreements
- No independent economic strategy

Martinique cannot make economic decisions—France decides.

2. Structural dependency:

- Economy not viable without French transfers (trade deficit ~€2.5-3 billion)
- If France stopped transfers, economy would collapse
- Employment depends on French money (public sector 30-35%, private services depend on French transfers)
- No productive base—services and consumption, minimal production

3. Békés maintained economic control:

- Same families control 50-70% of private economy
- Slavery-era wealth compounded across 390 years
- No reparations, no land redistribution, no transformation of property relations
- Békés capture much of French transfer money through monopolistic businesses

4. French transfers extract through trade:

- France transfers €2+ billion
- Martinique imports €3+ billion (mostly from France)
- Net effect: Martinique is captive market for French goods
- French companies profit from Martinique's consumption

5. High unemployment despite prosperity:

- 20% unemployment (40% youth) shows economic dysfunction
- French welfare prevents poverty but doesn't create opportunities
- Young people emigrate to France (brain drain)
- Economy serves consumption, not production

6. Cultural imperialism:

- French language dominates education, government, media
- Creole stigmatized
- Martinican children learn French history, not Martinique history
- Cultural identity subordinated to French identity

7. Colonial psychology:

- Martinicans fear independence because they've internalized dependency
- "Better békés and French control than be like Haiti"—this fear maintains system
- Welfare co-opts resistance—material security prevents revolutionary consciousness

8. Contemporary extraction examples:

- Chlordecone: Békés/French poisoned population for profit
- 2009 strike: Békés profiteering off high prices
- Békés businesses capture excessive profits while workers struggle
- Békés monopolies prevent competition, enabling price-gouging

Conclusion (extraction argument): Departmentalization adapted extraction to most efficient form yet. French welfare prevents resistance while békés maintain economic control and France captures trade profits. Material benefits are real but come at cost of permanent dependency and sovereignty loss. This is welfare colonialism—generous welfare masking continued subordination.

The Truth: Both Transformation and Extraction

The evidence supports both interpretations because **both are true simultaneously:**

Transformation:

- Material conditions genuinely improved
- Legal equality achieved
- Political participation enabled
- Welfare benefits are real

Extraction continuity:

- Békés maintained economic control (390 years)
- Dependency replaced direct exploitation
- Sovereignty permanently traded for welfare
- France captures trade profits

The pattern: Extraction mechanisms adapted to each legal transformation while fundamental structures persisted. Békés maintained land/capital ownership; French metropolitan interests captured trade profits; workers gained welfare but lost economic autonomy.

This is extraction through welfare dependency—the most sophisticated form of extraction yet.

The system provides genuine benefits (healthcare, education, income security) that prevent resistance and create appearance of development. But fundamental power relations—békés control capital, France controls sovereignty, workers remain economically subordinate—persist under new legal forms.

Whether this represents acceptable tradeoff depends on one's values:

If material prosperity is paramount: Departmentalization succeeded. Martinicans have vastly better living standards than independent Caribbean nations. Healthcare, education, infrastructure exceed most Caribbean. This is genuine development.

If sovereignty and economic autonomy are paramount: Departmentalization failed. Martinique lost ability to control its economic destiny. Permanent dependency replaced temporary colonialism. Békés maintained dominance. This is sophisticated extraction.

Most Martinicans accept the tradeoff—material prosperity without sovereignty—which is why independence movements failed. But structural problems (unemployment, békés dominance, dependency) reveal the arrangement's limitations.

Comparison to Other French Creole Societies

Martinique vs. Guadeloupe: Both DOM, similar material conditions, same békés dominance pattern. But Guadeloupe has stronger resistance tradition (2009 strike lasted 44 days vs. 38 in Martinique; 1967 massacre of construction workers radicalized Guadeloupe). Why this difference requires Guadeloupe case study.

Martinique vs. Haiti: This comparison is inevitable (Martinique's prosperity vs. Haiti's poverty makes it stark). But it reveals complexity:

Haiti: Sovereignty but poverty (~$1,700 per capita) Martinique: Dependency but prosperity (~$28,000 per capita)

Did Haiti's independence lead to poverty (Martinicans fear this)? Or did French indemnity, US occupation, elite extraction, and international isolation impoverish Haiti while French welfare enriched Martinique?

The comparison suggests that **sovereignty alone doesn't guarantee prosperity (Haiti proves this) but dependency with welfare provides material benefits while constraining autonomy (Martinique proves this)**.

Both patterns can coexist: Haiti demonstrates extraction persisting through elite capture despite independence; Martinique demonstrates extraction persisting through dependency despite welfare benefits.

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Contemporary Economy:

- Various INSEE reports on Martinique economy
- Academic studies on DOM economic dependency
- 2009 strike: news coverage, LKP documents

Comparative Caribbean:

- Palmié, Stephan and Francisco Scarano. *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*
- Knight, Franklin. *The Caribbean: Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*

Final Reflection: The 390-Year Question

Martinique's 390-year history from French colonization (1635) to present (2025) reveals an extraction pattern that adapted to every transformation while persisting fundamentally:

The pattern:

- 1635-1848: Direct extraction through slavery (békés owned people and land)
- 1848-1946: Extraction through wage labor and land monopoly (békés owned land, workers economically dependent)
- 1946-2025: Extraction through commercial control and dependency (békés control distribution, capture French transfer profits; France captures trade profits)

The continuity:

- Same békés families (Hayot, Pécoul, de Lucy, Aubéry, Assier de Pompignan) from 1600s-1700s to 2025
- Békés controlled 70-85% of wealth across 390 years through every transformation
- Workers/enslaved people/citizens remained economically subordinate across all periods
- France extracted more wealth than invested across all periods (colonial direct extraction → contemporary trade extraction)

The transformation:

- Material conditions improved dramatically (slavery → poverty → modest welfare → prosperity)
- Legal status changed fundamentally (property → colonial subject → French citizen)
- Political rights expanded (none → limited → full voting)
- Violence declined (whipping/torture → economic coercion → welfare dependency)

The verdict:

Extraction patterns in Martinique **adapted rather than broke** across 390 years. The mechanisms changed (slavery → wage labor → welfare dependency); the fundamental structure persisted (békés controlled capital, France controlled sovereignty, masses remained economically subordinate).

Whether one judges this as acceptable depends on values: prosperity without sovereignty vs. poverty with independence. Most Martinicans chose prosperity. But structural problems—unemployment, békés dominance, dependency, loss of self-determination—reveal the arrangement's costs.

The final question Martinique poses: Can a society genuinely develop while permanently dependent, even if that dependency comes with substantial welfare benefits? Or does permanent dependency represent sophisticated extraction—providing enough material comfort to prevent resistance while maintaining fundamental subordination?

The evidence suggests: **Both are true. Martinique developed materially while remaining structurally dependent. Welfare benefits are real; continued extraction is also real. Transformation and extraction adaptation coexist.**

This makes Martinique analytically significant: It demonstrates that extraction patterns can persist across nearly four centuries, adapting to every legal transformation (abolition, departmentalization, welfare state) while maintaining fundamental structures (élite property control, dependency, economic subordination). The form changes; the pattern persists.

END OF MARTINIQUE CASE STUDY

French Creole Societies Project Martinique: Extraction Through Continuity (1635-2025)

This case study stands as complete analysis of Martinique's 390-year history from French colonization to present. When placed alongside other French Caribbean cases (Haiti, Guadeloupe, French Guiana) and cases from British, Dutch, and Portuguese colonial projects, patterns of extraction persistence and adaptation across different colonial systems will emerge naturally from comparative analysis.

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This case study is part of the collection *Patterns of Power: Systematic Analysis of Elite Control Mechanisms Across Civilizations*